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ANNE ISABELLA MILBANKE WHEN ABOUT TEN YEARS OLD

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ASTARTE

A FRAGMENT OF TRUTH CONCERNING GEORGE GORDON BYRON, SIXTH LORD BYRON

RECORDED BY HIS GRANDSON
RALPH MILBANKE, EARL OF LOVELACE

NEW EDITION · WITH MANY
ADDITIONAL LETTERS · EDITED
BY MARY COUNTESS OF LOVELACE

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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MCMXXI

INTRODUCTION

BY THE EDITOR

THE original edition of "Astarte," so named after the character in Byron's "Manfred," appeared first in the year 1905. The author had intended to write for private circulation only, desiring above all things to avoid the possibility of making money out of the story of his ancestors, but he found it necessary to protect the copyright of his book by going through the form of publication. Out of two hundred copies printed a small number only were sold to approved purchasers, selected from a long list of applicants. The remainder were given away. The few copies that have since then from time to time reached the auction room have realised very high prices.

"Astarte" has therefore been read hitherto by comparatively few persons, but it is known by hearsay to a great many. It has been almost inevitably misrepresented as an immoral book, unnecessarily raking up a half-forgotten scandal. Those who know the pain and travail of mind with which it was produced, and how distasteful to the author was the duty of clearing away once for all the cloud of calumnies and injustices which had settled round certain facts, feel that the time has come for defending his memory. His book shall speak for itself. He had always foreseen that it must sooner or later be given to a wider public. In his own preface he said:

> "Apocryphal personalities about the Byrons were what forced the preparation of 'Astarte'; and some

preliminary notice has been taken of that swollen triumph of deception which seemed everlasting, though doomed to burst by dint of time. This is done in the first two chapters, headed: 'Lady Byron's Policy of Silence,' and 'Informers and Defamers.' They are not quite in their right place at the beginning, and I should have liked to transfer their substance, somewhat compressed and fortified, to an appendix, instead of leaving them in front of the essential part of the history. The change could not now be made without considerable inconvenience, but it is recommended that the second part of 'Astarte' be read before looking at Chapters I and II of the First Part."

In the opinion of various good judges of literature, and especially of the late William De Morgan, a life-long friend of the author, "Astarte" had suffered from the inclusion of certain extraneous matter. This was of two kinds: first, an unnecessary amount of detail about individuals who were concerned with the records of Byron's life immediately after his death; and second, a considerable mass of quotation, consisting largely of extracts from French sources, dealing principally with Byron and the epoch of the French Restoration. This last, mainly collected in the Appendices of the Original Edition, is excellent reading for lovers of literature, but it is not of the highest relevance.

I have acted on this opinion, but only with the greatest caution. In the first two chapters only of the Original Edition, "Lady Byron's Policy of Silence" and "Informers and Defamers," I have made a strictly limited number of excisions, and I have adopted Lovelace's own suggestion in the passage above quoted, and have printed these two chapters and the following one "When we Dead Awake," *after* Part II. instead of before it; Chapters I. to V. of this edition comprise

what was originally Part II. The change certainly makes for greater clearness. Apart from these slight alterations, the text is exactly as given in the original edition. At the close of that text I have introduced much important new matter which I will describe later.

" Astarte " is not so much a narrative as a commentary upon events and discussions very familiar to the writer's own generation. As these cannot be equally familiar to the present one, I give the following explanation :

When, in the year 1816, Lord Byron, then at the height of his fame, separated from his young wife—after only twelve months of married life—the sensation created in the social and literary world was immense. No reason for their parting being made public by either side, speculations and rumours of every kind were rife. The most serious of the latter was to the effect that a guilty connection existed between Byron and his own half-sister, Augusta (Byron), wife of Colonel George Leigh, and mother of several children. This rumour, supported by the theme of Byron's " Manfred," was discredited at the time and for many years afterwards by the conduct of Lady Byron, who continued *apparently* to keep up an affectionate intimacy with Mrs. Leigh, and never by word or deed confirmed the accusations against her and Lord Byron. In the course of years these accusations were forgotten by all save a very few persons, possessed of real information. Mrs. Leigh died in 1851 and Lady Byron in 1860. In 1869, nine years after the latter event, Mrs. Beecher Stowe electrified the reading world both in England and America by the announcement that Lady Byron had (a few years before her death) confided to her that the story of the guilt of Byron and Augusta was in fact true.

Many persons now alive must remember the hubbub

caused by this publication,[1] and the storm of obloquy that was poured out in the press not only upon Mrs. Stowe but upon the memory of Lady Byron, whose confidence had been thus unscrupulously betrayed. For many years speculations upon the "Byron Mystery" continued to be published in innumerable forms, and the defenders of Lord Byron—often obviously insincere—revelled in accusations against Lady Byron, alternately of malicious calumny or of an insanely morbid imagination. "Astarte" is the answer to these accusations.

Those who wish to study the life of Byron should read the recent excellent biography of him, written by Ethel Colburne Mayne,[2] the only "Life" which gives a really comprehensive and impartial picture of the poet and his surroundings. The monumental edition of Lord Byron's "Letters and Journals," edited by Rowland Prothero,[3] is of course, well known to students. Moore's "Life," apart from other faults, is written from very insufficient materials, and is now quite superseded.

The original narrative of "Astarte" ends with Chapter VIII. Immediately after this, and before the Appendices, will be found in Chapters IX., X. and XI. a number of new letters, chosen and collated by me from original documents in my possession. These are:—

1. Some of the correspondence between Lady Byron, Mrs. Leigh and Mrs. Villiers[4] in 1816, hitherto unpublished, but occasionally quoted from in Chapter III., pp. 60 to 66.

[1] "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Macmillan's Magazine*, September, 1869; published simultaneously in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

[2] "Byron," by Ethel Colburne Mayne. Methuen. 1912.

[3] Now Lord Ernle.

[4] Hon. Therese Parker, daughter of first Lord Boringdon, and wife of the Hon. George Villiers. See note, Chapter III., p. 57.

2. An inscription apparently sent by Augusta to Byron with a lock of hair, and endorsed by him.

3. The full text of some of Byron's letters to Augusta, 1816 to 1823, and three letters to Lady Byron.

I have included these in response to a generally expressed criticism to the effect that the narrative of "Astarte" was not sufficiently supported by documents. They by no means exhaust the evidence to the same effect in my hands. Lovelace had been much influenced by Sir Leslie Stephen's wish that he should print as few as possible of "poor Mrs. Leigh's very painful letters," and he also realised that any *short* selections from the correspondence of the three women above described could not be convincing. Perhaps only those who have read in its entirety this long series of letters, which continued at irregular intervals from 1816 to 1851, continually touching on the same problems as developed by time, can realise its full significance. In addition, these letters will answer, I think finally, one of the principal objections to the argument of "Astarte," made especially by women, that Lady Byron *could* not have continued to show affection, or even pity, for Augusta, if at the time she had really believed in her guilt. Many years later, questioned about these things by the friend of her old age, Frederick Robertson, the great preacher, Lady Byron said, "I loved her, and I love her still!" From this long series of letters and from other correspondence in his possession, the author drew his appreciations of character and many sidelights upon events. His main narrative is founded upon Lady Byron's "Statements." For a full description of these see Note to page 21. This and all other notes added by the Editor to the original matter of "Astarte" are printed in square brackets.

The most just criticism of "Astarte" was that it

should have appeared earlier. At the time of Mrs. Stowe's revelations, the friends of Lady Byron, who bitterly resented the injustice of the public towards her, were yet living. The release from the burden of silence would, after the first shock, have been unspeakable relief to them. And the effect would have been to make impossible the publication of various more or less poisonous rehashes of the story which went on for years to come. I have tried in my short memoir of my husband,[1] to explain why any publication of the truth at that date was impossible, and to show how the fact that he was unable to discharge what he felt to be a sacred obligation at the right time was an intolerable weight upon him for the rest of his life. I would ask those who, having read "Astarte," are still inclined to blame the author of it for his action, to read the narrative of his life, as I have put it together. Whatever be the shortcomings of my story, I hope and believe that it will at least give some understanding of and sympathy with the man who had to face so great a dilemma, and who felt that, however belated, his only possible course was—honesty.

MARY CAROLINE LOVELACE.

1921.

[1] "Ralph Earl of Lovelace." A Memoir. Christophers. 1920.

PREFACE

BY THE AUTHOR

"Ne quid falsi audeat . . . ne quid veri non audeat."
(*De Oratore*, ii, 15.)

FACTS and comments have been here placed together in obedience to two duties. It was right to preserve a minimum of truth and justice from eventual risks, and in some measure at the same time to testify how deeply the sources of literature were poisoned by Byronese traders. The truth may not be attended to now, or adapted for a wide circulation ; still it is henceforth perpetuated in a form accessible to those who choose to search, and the reign of falsehood at last meets with authorized resistance.

There was nothing in Lord Byron's amazing indiscretions to justify a counterfeit work of exposing or explaining him away. The sombre outlaw Manfred is a fairer and nobler portrait than Lord Byron, emptied of his character and history, converted into an advertising nuisance and completed into a copious soporific for respectable citizens willing to take a dose of edification. The real man was not to be found in letters to paid friends or an artificial padding of commentaries. Lord Byron's fame sorely needs untarnishing if possible from posthumous contamination by his ignoble acquaintances. His robes and patents of celebrity were seized to make the notoriety and fortunes of pretended literary representatives—self-consecrated in Lord Byron's stead, though alien in reality—not unlike the highwaymen of old on Hounslow Heath, described by Swift as dressing themselves up in the spoils of the worthy divines they regularly robbed and murdered on the road to take possession of Irish bishoprics.

Perhaps it would have been better never to publish any thing about Lord Byron when he was dead; but after a heavy accumulation of coarse misrepresentation, the dark night of his real history seems less suffocating than the poison of flatteries and familiarities in apocryphal compilations.

The work of invention did not stop at Lord Byron, but was indulged in against Lady Byron with at least equal profusion; and in addition to a natural wish that unveracities may burst, there are strong reasons for establishing her truth and honour against the unmeasured imposture of certain accusers. Her own authority for such a refutation exists in a paper of directions signed 18th February, 1850, as well as in the provisions of her will, drawn up in 1860. The document of 1850 is quoted on page 158. I am in possession of the original manuscripts subject to those trusts, and it is in exercise of the responsibility attached that "Astarte" has been compiled from the documents thus authenticated.

I have not sought for information outside the papers held on this fiduciary tenure. Of all the books about Lord Byron, I have referred only to those which date far back. I am not familiar with things published about him for some fifteen or twenty years past. Nothing has appeared that I should have sanctioned or condoned. In the absence of acknowledged power to prohibit, I did not care to examine. My duties are not to search for information from sources I mistrust; and it is unnecessary for me to investigate the character of books made up by strangers with uncertain ingredients; therefore I do not read them.

On receipt of applications to edit poetry or prose of Lord Byron's, I intimated that I would endeavour to deal with the materials that might be forthcoming if they were all placed unreservedly in my hands. Of course I declined to engage myself specifically whilst utterly unacquainted with the manuscripts which must

have been submitted to me before I could formulate a scheme. Those papers, etc., never were intrusted to me for inspection, and, so far as I was concerned, all proposals connected with them naturally fell to the ground. I had refused to pledge myself beforehand what I should put in or leave out, as to which my own discretion had to be absolute. I also declared that I could sanction no rivalries, competitions, and contests amongst publishers or editors. All these communications led to fundamental disagreement, and negociations were closed with mutually unsatisfactory impressions.[1] My principal object would have been to avoid any hasty measure of excessive production, and to moderate the burst of superfluous activity upon Lord Byron. I never could have been a vassal to foreign schemes, however masterful in themselves or meritorious in the eyes of promoters.

The most essential facts of this fragment of history will be found in pages 33–100,[2] which comprise Chapters II, III, and IV of "Astarte." Sir Leslie Stephen's remarks on the documents contained in those chapters are also worthy of attention and are quoted at pages 179–181. He authorized this use of his letters and gave leave to mention how they came to be written. His spirit of equity and peace is now inaccessible to consultations, but it may be hoped that the reference to him at page 176 would not have been found incorrect or improper, though he could hardly sanction some of the other pages in this book. It will be seen that, while

[1] [It is fair to say that Mr. Murray has given an account of the transactions between himself and the author of "Astarte" which differs in many respects from the above. Lovelace never saw this rejoinder. His own position in regard to the "Letters and Journals," edited by R. E. Prothero (Lord Ernle), is explained in Chapter VII. of my Memoir, "Ralph Earl of Lovelace." I can say from my own knowledge that the reference on the preceding page to "books made up by strangers" was of a very general character, and was written in allusion to many and various publications.—Ed.]

[2] [See Introduction. In the text of this Preface the numbers of the pages referred to have been altered to correspond with those of the present edition. They still, however, comprise Chapters II., III. and IV. of the present volume.—Ed.]

admitting there were strong reasons for defending Lady Byron, he deeply regretted a necessity he was too just to dispute. The case for Lady Byron (as presented at pages 179–180 in Sir Leslie Stephen's words) rests upon the testimony of Dr. Lushington, Colonel Doyle, Robert Wilmot, Lord Byron, and Mrs. Leigh, as well as Lady Byron herself, in the document at page 46 and the letters in Chapter IV. Chapter V should also be referred to. Some very remarkable words will be found in Byron's reply to his wife's assurance of December 10, 1820, that "the past should not prevent her from befriending Augusta Leigh." He declares in the letter of December 28, 1820 (printed on pages 111–112), that his life with Augusta had been perfectly distinct from his life with Lady Byron: "When one ceased, the other began—and now both are closed." He adds: "She [Augusta] and two others were the only things I ever really loved." (See Chapter V, pages 112–113). To make the story more intelligible, an epitome of events and correspondence from June, 1813, to December, 1820, is included in Chapters II to V, with textual evidence of the most essential points; and nothing is stated that I am not in a position to authenticate by papers in my possession; but it would serve no purpose to elucidate every detail of the history on this occasion.

Apocryphal personalities about the Byrons were what forced the preparation of "Astarte"; and some preliminary notice has been taken of that swollen triumph of deception which seemed everlasting, though doomed to burst by dint of time. This is done in the first two chapters, headed: "Lady Byron's policy of silence," and "Informers and defamers." They are not quite in their right place at the beginning, and I should have liked to transfer their substance, somewhat compressed and fortified, to an appendix, instead of leaving them in front of the essential part of the history. The change could not now be made without considerable inconvenience, but it is recommended that the second Part

of " Astarte " be read before looking at Chapters I and II of the First Part.[1]

It would have been betrayal of a trust to be silent, and I was driven virtually unaided to discover as best I could by a process of failure how to execute a difficult and thankless task. Much of it was badly done, and none as it should have been. The crudest and weakest places might perhaps be considerably amended, even at my hands, if it were worth while or practicable to undertake so heavy a labour over again. But, after all, evidences speak for themselves, and are faithfully recorded, though no great advocate has been found to introduce and make the most of them, and though the great mass of important evidence has been left aside for the present. However unsatisfactory the work, and inadequate to consume a vast palace of lies, nothing can be made worse by what I do ; any change must be some diminution of injury and fiction about everything connected with the name of Byron. Great structures of secret fraud may sometimes fall at a touch : " Souvent en arrachant un brin d'herbe, on fait crouler une grande ruine." [2]

Byron's character was a labyrinth of irreconcilables. Every conclusion requires qualification. One view is limited by another, both being equally real though in apparent contradiction to each other.[3]

Subject to this reserve, I do not think I have made any statements likely to admit of specific modification. Opinions and inferences have been formed and stated with care and sincerity ; whether they find favour everywhere is of minor importance ; and no one, I think, can possibly expect me to " contradict the contradictor," answer questions, or promise to look at

[1] [See Introduction. This change has now been effected.—Ed.]

[2] Congrès de Vérone.

[3] " Si vous avez le malheur, dans un débat, d'introduire deux idées qui se limitent l'une l'autre, vous voyez sourire tout l'auditoire, qui semble se dire : ' En voilà un qui se contredit ! ' L'homme naturel, quand il n'est pas dans un grand repos et soumis à un régime très-rafraîchissant, ne peut etre possédé que par une seule idée ou un seul sentiment. C'est même l'histoire tragique de toutes les sottises et de la moitié des crimes de l'humanité." (X. Doudan to L. de Viel-Castel, 22 juillet, 1858.)

what strangers may say. I put on record certain facts and repudiate those deceptions which I ought to notice.

Having done so, nothing is further from my mind than to take part in discussion ; and I shall adhere in silence to what I have written.

L.

July 31, 1905.

TO

M. C. L.

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF STEADY SYMPATHY AND ENCOURAGEMENT, AND EQUALLY NECESSARY CRITICISM, WITHOUT WHICH THIS ANXIOUS DUTY, IMPOSSIBLE TO NEGLECT AND HARDLY MORE POSSIBLE TO EXECUTE, COULD PERHAPS NEITHER HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN NOR CARRIED THROUGH.

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EXPLANATION

CAPTAIN JOHN BYRON, son of Admiral the Hon. John Byron, married first, 1779, Amelia, Baroness Conyers in her own right, divorced wife of the Marquis of Carmarthen. Of this marriage was born in January, 1784, Augusta Mary Byron, and her mother died in giving her birth. In 1785 Captain John Byron married secondly Catherine Gordon of Gight, who on 22 January, 1788, brought into the world George Gordon, afterwards sixth Lord Byron. Captain Byron died in 1791. The children of these two marriages were hardly at all companions in childhood. The girl was brought up by her maternal grandmother, Dowager Countess of Holdernesse. The boy was with his mother or at school. In 1807 Augusta Mary Byron married her cousin, Colonel George Leigh; and it was not till she had been some years a wife and mother that she and her half-brother saw each other with any frequency. For further details see chronological table, Appendix K.

ASTARTE

CHAPTER I

BYRON CHARACTERISTICS

" Ich leb und weisz nicht wie lang
ich sterb und weisz nicht wann
ich fahr und weisz nicht wohin
mich wundert dasz ich fröhlich bin."

Inscription on a house at Partenkirchen, Bavaria. According to tradition, originally written by Maximilian I on a wall of the Castle of Tratzberg, Tirol.

IT will not be irrelevant to begin the record of events with the observation that never, perhaps, has constitutional melancholy been more closely allied to, though hidden under, levity and wit, than in the mysterious being who died at Missolonghi on Easter Monday, 1824.[1] His merriment was " foam that floated on the waters of bitterness." [2] Laughter and profound sadness flow together all through the course of his life, and were mingled even in the melancholy circumstances that have to be noticed in these pages.

When he and Augusta were snowed up together at Newstead in January, 1814, they made the old ruinous

[1] April 19th, or 7th in the Old Style, for it happened also to be Easter Monday in the Julian Calendar.

[2] " When he would converse familiarly, there was a sort of conventional language of nonsense between us—which relieved his fears of ' Sermons and Sentiment,' and rather gave play to his Imagination than confined it. In the midst of this childishness, which with Augusta was continual, he would suddenly deliver the deepest reflections and then shrink again into frolic and levity. The transitions had all the grace of Genius, and formed its greatest charm to me, till I learned to consider those light and brilliant effusions only as the foam that might float on the waters of bitterness " (from narrative by Lady Byron, dated March, 1817).

spaces resound with their laughter, but "a deep abiding sadness always filled his heart"—in common with another incomplete man of action, Mazzini—who as a poet and a thinker was not without affinity to Byron. They both, "with a few exceptions, despised the present generation."[1] Mazzini found his only consolation amidst the selfishness and stupidity, the deformities and disasters of humanity of the present, in visions and prophecies of restoration to a lost ideal in an immeasurably remote future. Byron saw in his imagination an incommensurable void gaping beneath overhanging ledges upon which he was perched, with no possible descent. Bulging precipices drop beneath him to uplands glowing in the tints of June. A sunny mirage from the chasm between his feet becomes the vision of the optimist dreamer, but Byron well knows that no living foot can ever plant itself upon that paradise, the flight to which seems so easy,[2] and he takes refuge from the terror of the abyss in formidable flashes of laughter, in fleeting agitations, diversions and illusions. "He gives the tumultuous eagerness of action and the fixed despair of thought," said Hazlitt.[3]

It was noticed[4] that his feelings, even when most "soft and voluptuous," are "tinged with the same shade of sorrow which gives character and harmony" to the lines:

> "It is the hour when from the boughs
> The nightingale's high note is heard;
> It is the hour when lover's vows
> Seem sweet in every whispered word."

[1] "Personal Recollections of Mazzini," by M. Blind ("Fortnightly Review," May, 1891, p. 708).

[2]
> "Ye crags upon whose extreme edge
> I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
> Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
> In dizziness of distance;
> Beautiful!
> How beautiful is all this visible world!
> How glorious in its action and itself!"
>
> "Manfred," Act I, Sc. 2.

[3] On the Living Poets.

[4] In the "Edinburgh Review."

Dramatic and voluptuous pessimism seems to have been inborn in him—a sensuous and poetical leaning, which excited unbounded scorn for the unctuous optimism which flatters social democracy—the ragged sovereign who exceeds even oriental despots and gods in his taste for compliments. This and certain bitter personal recollections—unavowed wounded feelings—impelled him to burning words of acute hatred,[1] thus exhausting revenge, for never was language of extreme violence more severed from vindictiveness in action. Ferocity there was in him. A display of moral baseness, of human infamy caught in the act, stirred him to fierce transports of delight. Such cruel rejoicing over the ignominy of man is said to be the resurrection of an ape or tiger ancestor. Unregenerate love of torture has been refined into sardonic exultation at men's vileness.

It may be that Lord Byron was peculiarly a re-incarnation of cosmic man, similar in this to Napoleon, who, as was said by Madame de Staël, Stendhal, and Byron himself,[2] was a mediæval Italian risen from the bones of the dead.

The influence of Lord Byron's descent upon his ambiguity and mobility of character has been too much overlooked. By his fathers he was the offspring of the

[1] "He who wishes for 'a curse to kill with' may find it in Lord Byron's writings. Yet he has beauty lurking underneath his strength, tenderness sometimes joined with the phrenzy of despair. A flash of golden light sometimes follows from a stroke of his pencil, like a falling meteor. The flowers that adorn his poetry bloom over charnel-houses and the grave!" (Hazlitt, "Lecture on Living Poets").

[2] He said to Lady Byron at Seaham in February, 1815: "Bonaparte's conduct since his fall is to be traced entirely to the Italian character—for a Frenchman or Englishman would have shot himself. An Italian will persevere—waiting for any chance or change."

At Elba Napoleon wrote: "Ne m'étant pas donné la vie, je ne me l'ôterai pas non plus, tant qu'elle voudra bien de moi" (Chateaubriand, "Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe").

It has been recorded, however, that Napoleon tried ineffectually at Fontainebleau to poison himself.

Chateaubriand wrote: "Chez Napoléon, la grandeur du cœur ne répondait pas à la largeur de la tête: ses querelles avec les Anglais sont déplorables; elles révoltent Lord Byron. Comment daigna-t-il honorer d'un mot ses geôliers?"

Hazlitt's "Lecture on Living Poets" quarrels with Lord Byron for "writing both for and against Buonaparte."

oligarchy against which his cry of revolt resounded, but through his mother he was descended from the conquered and lawless Celts, from whom he inherited his superstitious fancies, and perhaps the peculiar strain of wit and levity which floated on the surface of his constitutional melancholy. This last was to some extent common to his father and him, but may have been intensified by his portion of Celtic blood. A certain amount of antagonism was obvious in him to the ascendant Saxon nationality, amidst which his Norman forefathers had become merged. He spoke with sympathy of those Celtic rebels, who, down to his own time, had caused so much terror and suffered such ghastly repression. In April, 1812, in one of his few speeches to the House of Lords, he compared the Irish Union to the "union of the shark with his prey." [1] With his infusion of alien blood, he did not sympathize with rejoicings over the triumphs of the great war, and his fury on hearing of the catastrophe of Waterloo has been described.[2] Later, in Italy, he started a very similar animosity to the Austrian domination in Lombardy, so like that of the English in Ireland, both in its benefits and the not altogether unnatural loathing it inspired.

He was destitute of the more serviceable qualities of the English, by whom he was hardly loved, even at the time of his ominous vogue, and still less understood unless with the clairvoyance of antipathy. It was from the scum and weeds of England that voracious admirers or pretended admirers, swarmed upon his memory. Abroad he had less detrimental adherents.

[1] O'Connell quoted these words in a House of Commons debate about February, 1844.

[2] By Lady Byron, amongst others. See also Ticknor's Diary, of June 20th 1815.

The Celtic element with which he was (from an English point of view) contaminated, made him more liked in France. Since writing the above, I have read in an interesting article on the Celtic revival in Ireland by M. Louis Paul Dubois :

"'Le celtisme' a sa part dans ce composé d'élémens très divers qu'est l'esprit anglais ; on le sent très manifestement chez quelques-uns des plus grands hommes, des plus grands poètes de l'Angleterre, chez Byron, par exemple" ("Revue des deux Mondes," 15 avril, 1902).

He was a man of the past and a destroyer of the past without being a man of progress. He lived in a time of coercion and smouldering rebellion, hating the "governors" with something like personal enmity, but thinking of the "governed" with contempt. His rank and celebrity gave a licence of speech against the Court, administration and established religion which he seemed to enjoy rather from pride of birth than sympathy with the Democrats, except those of his own station, for he had little patience with familiarity from individuals of other social grades. He warmed his imagination—on paper—at an exhilarating blaze of Jacobin destruction, but he no more loved Whiggery, reform, sovereignty of the populace, than he loved Lord Eldon. "Such fanciful chimeras as a golden mountain or a perfect man" and "the boundless pursuit of universal benevolence" were not for Lord Byron. He despised the Utopian philosophers, and could not "rush forward into their ideal world as into a *vacuum* of good." He did not suppose that "all things would move on by the mere impulse of wisdom and virtue, to still higher and higher degrees of perfection and happiness." He wanted no schemes by which men should be "hurried forward with the progress of improvement, and dashed to pieces down the tremendous precipice of human perfectibility."[1] No wonder that universal suffrage should not think highly of him. All things considered, his influence upon that long-vanished society was astonishing and inexplicable. For a brief epoch he acted, perhaps more than he was aware of or intended, as a disintegrating force upon the community which had withstood the shock of the French Revolution, and himself largely contributed to that radical transformation which amongst other effects extinguished his own memory, except as an episode in the decline and fall of oligarchical England into popular government.

"Unconsumed and still consuming" passions drove

[1] Hazlitt, "Spirit of the Age." On Sir James Mackintosh, William Godwin, Mr. Malthus.

him from childhood, and devastated the lives of himself and those near him—made him a destroyer of all he could reach in private or public.

"But still there is power; and power rivets attention and forces admiration. 'He hath a demon'; and that is the next thing to being full of the God. His brow collects the scattered gloom: his eye flashes livid fire that withers and consumes. But still we watch the progress of the scathing bolt with interest, and mark the ruin it leaves behind with awe." [1]

Though it is hardly, if at all, mentioned, he must have read "René," wherein Chateaubriand idealized the morbid passion of the revolutionary generation. Byron was curiously addicted to imitating anything that might impress him as a literary image of himself. It is a remarkable coincidence that the remorse of René was caused by guilt with a sort of prototype of Astarte. Chateaubriand gave an interesting explanation of the logical necessity to connect the fatal career of René with the forbidden relationships. And undoubtedly that particular defiance of perpetual law was characteristic of the age of the French Revolution.[2]

[1] Hazlitt, "Lecture on Living Poets." Mr. Birrell ("William Hazlitt") refers to Lord Byron's greatness as a destroyer:

"Just as a mournful Scotch proprietor judges of the strength of a gale of wind by walking through his plantations after it has dropped, and 'moaning the expense' of many a fallen tree, so it is only by reading the lives and letters of his astonished contemporaries and immediate successors that you are able to form some estimate of the power of Byron."

[2] The atmosphere at that time was prolific of such reports and of a curious latitude of opinion and language.

Madame de Staël's perfectly legitimate though exaggerated sentiment about her father was sometimes singularly expressed. Necker died April 10th, 1804; and in the autumn his daughter published a book on his domestic life and character, in which she expressed the wish that she could have been a contemporary of his youth, and actually wrote: "Nos destinées auraient pu s'unir pour toujours!"

In some indiscreet confidences, of about 1803, to Madame de Rémusat, Josephine spoke of Bonaparte as another Caligula: "N'avait-il pas séduit ses sœurs, les unes après les autres?" ("Memoirs of Mme. de Rémusat," i. 204). This might have been suggested by: "Cum omnibus sororibus suis stupri consuetudinem fecit" (Suetonius, "Caligula," xxiii.). In the spirit of "Memento, ait, omnia mihi et in omnes liceri" (Suetonius, "Caligula," xxix.) Bonaparte used to say: "Je ne suis pas un homme comme un autre, et les lois

Manfred, with all its underlying reality, was in literature but a René in slight disguise.[1] René was Chateaubriand himself, Amélie was Lucile, that charming sister in whom was embodied all the genius of René in the ideal and innocent perfection of nature and sincerity. She could not write, but only feel and die.[2] The question: What was the mystery? Was there a mystery about Lucile? can be answered fearlessly: There is nothing to deform the pure and touching portrait of Lucile in the "Mémoires d'Outre Tombe," so fugitive in its vivid melancholy. There the resemblance between Manfred and René ends. Amélie escapes all comparison with Astarte.[3]

de morale ou de convenance ne peuvent être faites pour moi" ("Madame de Rémusat," i. 278).

A report about Bonaparte and his youngest sister Caroline (born at Ajaccio, March 25th, 1782, married to Joachim Murat January 20th, 1800, died at Florence May 18th, 1839) was one principal reason for the alienation of the First Consul from General Moreau. Madame Moreau's mother, during a visit to Malmaison, made some sarcastic allusions to the story, which could never be forgiven by Bonaparte.

The twelve Caesars were sacred beings while Napoleon ruled. It was seditious to speak evil of masters of the world. The providential judgments of Tacitus were resented by Napoleon like a condemnation of himself. Chateaubriand's sentence: "C'est en vain que Néron prospère, Tacite est déjà né dans l'empire, . . . et déjà l'intègre Providence a livré à un enfant obscur la gloire du maître du monde," in 1807 caused the suppression of "le Mercure,"—orders being nearly given also to arrest the writer. Napoleon said: "Chateaubriand croit-il que je suis un imbécile, que je ne le comprends pas! Je le ferai sabrer sur les marches des Tuileries."

[1] "'Manfred n'est qu'un René habillé à la Shakespeare' (Chênedollé). Le mot est bien dit si l'on n'en abuse pas" (Sainte Beuve, "Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire sous l'empire," Quinzième Leçon, p. 364).

Béranger said that Byron was of the family of René. Villemain wrote of Byron in the "Biographie Universelle": "Quelques pages incomparables de *René* avaient épuisé ce caractère poétique. Je ne sais si Byron les imitait ou les renouvelait de génie."

[2] "On a entendu . . . d'admirables pages de Lucille sa sœur, l'*Amélie* de *René*, génie de mélancolie égal au sien, qui aurait eu l'art, si elle avait voulu, mais elle *pratiqua* la sensibilité plutôt que de la dépeindre. Inquiète, malheureuse d'imagination et assiégée de terreurs presque comme Jean-Jacques elle se dévora. Ce que René a dit, elle l'a fait. Quelqu'un entendant ces lettres de Lucile regrettait qu'elle n'eût pas écrit.—Laissez donc, répondit un plus sage, laissez un peu de sensibilité à l'état de nature et d'entière sincerité; il en faut aussi comme cela; on n'a pas de regret à avoir: à chacun son rôle; ils se le sont partagé; il a écrit pour elle, elle est morte pour lui" (Sainte Beuve, "Chateaubriand et son groupe," etc., Troisième Leçon, p. 97).

[3] "Amélie avait reçu de la nature quelque chose de divin; son âme avait les mêmes grâces innocentes que son corps; la douceur de ses sentiments était

Augusta was not the heir of Lucile, though Byron inherited René's *ennui* and *réverie*—his romantic voluptuousness, his extreme violence against political rulers, his disbelief in almost everything.[1]

Chateaubriand excepted honour and religion,—if he really excepted religion. Miss Randall said (see Moore's Diary) that Chateaubriand took up religion as Byron took up wickedness—as a subject—without either of them having much of the spirit of the subject chosen in his heart; it was for external application, if it could stop there, but the adoption of religion or wickedness as a practice, as it were not seriously, may affect the experimenter much more than skin deep.

Byron had been worked hard at Calvinistic religion in childhood, and the first thing he did on becoming his own master was to put all that aside with the profane grin of "an unbelieving schoolboy" (Moore's phrase). Much greater men than he have failed to shake off that iron-bound theology after a lifetime of study; and Byron, who had not studied at all (beyond the *ennui* he suffered from the Bible in infancy), came without effort to the same conclusions as Hume or Lucretius. Renan might say: "Let us not hasten to acknowledge Byron

infinie; il n'y avait rien que de suave et d'un peu rêveur dans son esprit; on eût dit que son cœur sa pensée et sa voix soupiraient comme de concert; elle tenait de la femme la timidité et l'amour, et de l'Ange la pureté et la mélodie."—"Une question qu'on voudrait repousser se glisse malgré nous: René est bien René, Amélie est bien Lucile; qu'est-ce donc? et qu'y a-t-il eu de réel au fond dans le reste du mystère? Poëte, comment donner à deviner de telles situations, si elles ont eu quelque chose de vrai? Comment les donner à supposer, si elles sont un rêve?" (Saint Beuve, "Chateaubriand et son groupe," etc., Troisième Leçon, p. 94).

[1] "Notre défaut capital est l'ennui, le dégoût de tout et le doute perpétuel."

"L'homme sage et inconsolé de ce siècle sans conviction ne rencontre un misérable repos que dans l'athéisme politique. Que les jeunes générations se bercent d'espérances, avant de toucher au but, elles attendront de longues années. Les âges vont au nivellement général, mais ils ne hâtent point leur marche à l'appel de nos désirs. Le Temps est une sorte d'Eternité appropriée aux choses mortelles; il compte pour rien les races et leurs douleurs dans les œuvres qu'il accomplit."

"Le ciel fait rarement naître ensemble l'homme qui veut et l'homme qui peut. En fin de compte, est-il aujourd'hui une chose pour laquelle on voulût se donner la peine de sortir de son lit? On s'endort au bruit des royaumes tombés pendant la nuit, et que l'on balaie chaque matin devant nos portes" ("Congrés de Vérone").

as greater than St. Augustine, Pascal, Calvin, or Dr. Chalmers. It is not every child of the gutter who has the right of Lucretius to profess himself an atheist." [1]

But, after all, the world owes something to the unbelieving schoolboy, to flippant urchins who laughed away, or helped to "laugh away hope" [2] of hell, made tangible in dominion of the saints, pious founders of an earthly hell. Without the obscene laughter of Voltaire, who knew nothing and taught nothing, stakes and faggots might have continued till now. The imp Byron (as Lady Holland called him) and the ape Voltaire [3] were partly in the right against churches without God and kings above the law. One may regret some things, but not everything, in what Renan called "l'effroyable aventure du moyen age." [4]

[1] "De ce qu'un gamin de Paris écarte par une plaisanterie des croyances dont la raison d'un Pascal ne réussit pas à se dégager, il ne faut cependant pas conclure que Gavroche est supérieur à Pascal. Je l'avoue, je me sens parfois humilié qu'il m'ait fallu cinq ou six ans de recherches ardentes, l'hébreu, les langues sémitiques, Gesenius, Ewald, pour arriver juste au résultat que ce petit drôle atteint tout d'abord. . . . Non, je ne veux pas croire que mes labeurs aient été vains, ni qu'en théologie on puisse avoir raison à aussi bon marché que le croient les rieurs. En réalité, peu de personnes ont le droit de ne pas croire au christianisme. Si tous savaient combien le filet tissé par les théologiens est solide, comme il est difficile d'en rompre les mailles, quelle érudition on y a déployée, quelle habitude il faut pour dénouer tout cela!" ("Souvenirs d'enfance," pp. 133, 134).

[2] A phrase of Lord Byron, often quoted by Lady Byron.

[3] Haydon marked "the cutting satire, the dreadful wit, the sneering chuckle of Voltaire"—"charitable from contempt, blasphemous from envy, pious from fear, and foul from a disgust at human nature." "It was as if a wrinkled fiend had put his grinning and ghastly face into a summer cloud, and changed its silvery sunniness into a black, heavy, suffocating vapour." (Life, ii. 71.) "The Excursion" has: "a fond, a vain old man."

[4] "Je me reproche quelquefois d'avoir contribué au triomphe de M. Homais (the Voltairean apothecary in 'Madame Bovary') sur son curé. Que voulez-vous? c'est M. Homais qui a raison. Sans M. Homais nous serions tous brûlés vifs. Mais, je le répète, quand on s'est donné bien du mal pour trouver la vérité, il en coûte d'avouer que ce sont les frivoles, ceux qui sont bien résolus à ne lire jamais saint Augustin ou saint Thomas d'Aquin, qui sont les vrais sages. Gavroche et M. Homais arrivant d'emblée et avec si peu de peine au dernier mot de la philosophie! c'est bien dur à penser" ("Souvenirs d'enfance").

The redoubtable pen of Hazlitt compared Lord Byron to "a solitary peak, all access to which is cut off not more by elevation than distance. He is seated on a lofty eminence, 'cloud-capt,' or reflecting the last rays of setting suns; . . . and in his poetical moods . . . taking up ordinary men and things with haughty indifference. . . . He exists not by sympathy, but by antipathy." But Hazlitt

Byron was so complex, contradictory, antithetical, as the craniologists used to say, as to elude analysis. The more his conflicting words and perplexing actions are compiled into books, the more enigmatic, unknowable, he becomes. He finally remains a riddle in human nature; its solution is equally impracticable and unprofitable. Lady Byron once wrote of him (somewhere about 1817): "His character is a labyrinth; but no clue would ever find the way to his *heart*."

He has been described as having "two selves, one frantic, the other calm, and contemplating almost with wonder the frenzy," as existing "almost in the voice of mankind," and dwelling in cold and remote inaccessibility to all human sympathy—"natura remota ab nostris rebus seiunctaque longe."

Lady Blessington reported that he said one day: "You will believe me, what I sometimes believe myself, mad, when I tell you that I seem to have *two* states of existence, *one* purely contemplative, during which the crimes, faults, and follies of mankind are laid open to my view (my own forming a prominent object in the picture), and the other *active*, when I play my part in the drama of life, as if impelled by some power over which I have no control, though the consciousness of doing wrong remains. It is as though I had the faculty of discovering error without the power of avoiding it." [1]

Lady Byron, in the course of 1818, wrote [2] that "his moralising and prophecies are a curious instance of that judgment which beholds as a spectator the destructive passions with which it is associated. It is an illustration of Fichte's doctrine as represented by Mme. de Staël: 'le Moi qui sert de base à tout; mais

also commemorates "Byron's glowing rage" and "applies to him more than to any of his contemporaries" Gray's image: "Thoughts that glow, and words that burn."

[1] "Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron," p. 118.

[2] In some manuscript notes on "Childe Harold."

'il distingue encore dans ce Moi celui qui est passager, 'et celui qui est durable.'" [1]

[1] "De l'Allemagne. Troisième Partie. Chapitre VII. Des Philosophes les plus célèbres de l'Allemagne, avant et après Kant."

Madame de Staël proceeds: "En effet, quand on réfléchit sur les opérations de l'entendement, on croit assister soi-même à sa pensée, on croit la voir passer comme l'onde, tandis que la portion de soi qui la contemple est immuable.

"Il arrive souvent à ceux qui réunissent un caractère passionné à un esprit observateur, de se regarder souffrir, et de sentir en eux-mêmes un être supérieur à sa propre peine, qui la voit, et tour-à-tour la blâme ou la plaint.

"Il s'opère des changements continuels en nous, par les circonstances extérieures de notre vie, et néanmoins nous avons toujours le sentiment de notre identité. Qu'est-ce donc qui atteste cette identité, si ce n'est le Moi toujours le même, qui voit passer devant son tribunal le Moi modifié par les impressions extérieures?"

The minister Ancillon told Ticknor on May 25th, 1836, that when Madame de Staël was at Berlin in 1804, "she had the men of letters of the time as it were trotted up and down before her successively to see their paces. I was present," he went on, "when Fichte's turn came. After talking with him a little while, she said, 'Now, Mons. *Fichté*, could you be so kind as to give me, in fifteen minutes or so, a sort of idea or *apercu* of your system, so that I may know clearly what you mean by your *ich*, your *moi*, for I am entirely in the dark about it.'

"The notion of explaining in a *petit quart d'heure*, to a person in total darkness, a system which he had been his whole life developing from a single principle within himself, and spinning, as it were, out of his own bowels, till its web embraced the whole universe, was quite shocking to the philosopher's dignity. However, being much pressed, he began, in rather bad French, to do the best he could. But he had not gone more than ten minutes before Madame de Staël, who had followed him with the greatest attention, interrupted him with a countenance full of eagerness and satisfaction: 'Ah! c'est assez, je comprends, je vous comprends parfaitement, Mons. *Fichté*. Your system is perfectly illustrated by a story in Baron Munchhausen's travels.' Fichte's face looked like a tragedy; the faces of the rest of the company a good deal like a *comédie larmoyante*. Madame de Staël heeded neither, but went on: 'For, when the Baron arrived once on the bank of a vast river, where there was neither bridge, nor ferry, nor even a poor boat or raft, he was at first confounded, quite in despair; until at last his wits coming to his assistance, he took a good hold of his own sleeve and jumped himself over to the other side. Now, Mons. *Fichté*, this, I take it, is just what you have done with your *ich*, your *moi*; n'est-ce pas?'

"There was so much truth in this, and so much *esprit*, that, of course, the effect was irresistible on all but poor Fichte himself. As for him, he never forgot or forgave Madame de Staël, who certainly, however, had no malicious purpose of offending him, and who, in fact, praised him and his *ich* most abundantly in her *De l'Allemagne*" ("Life of George Ticknor").

Her summary of that system is that "Fichte ne considère le monde extérieur que comme une borne de notre existence, sur laquelle la pensée travaille. Dans son système, cette borne est créee par l'âme elle-même, dont l'activité constante s'exercc sur le tissu qu'elle a formé . . . mais la nature et l'amour perdent tout leur charme par ce système; car si les objets que nous voyons et les êtres que nous aimons ne sont rien que l'œuvre de nos idées, c'est l'homme lui-même qu'on peut considérer comme le *grand célibataire des mondes*."

Madame de Staël's tactless wit may be compared to the flash of nonsense in

He was an artist in emotion,—one who could only act out sensations that really agitated him; but his moods were almost as much at command as those of that greatest of all comedians, Napoleon, whose passions certainly existed with extreme violence, and yet he also contrived to act them with dramatic effect calculated to help in his designs.[1] Byron had no hypocrisy, for that, as defined by Hazlitt, "is the setting up a pretention to a feeling you never had and have no wish for."[2] What could be imputed to him was "the voluntary overcharging or prolongation of a real sentiment," in consequence of which, and of the alternations of his dual nature, many were misled about him, and some said he was a prince of duplicity. He adapted himself too conspicuously to the tone of company of the meanest kind. His tumultuous spirits at Kinnaird's brandy parties (presided over by a left-handed Mrs. Kinnaird) were over-acted.[3] Those ignoble boon companions deceived themselves when they thought Byron most gay and unconcerned. When he took a part in the low comedy of bad company, his immutable self, unknown to such bystanders, was

which Mr. Anstey imitated the transcendental prose of Mr. Herbert Spencer: "And these illusive and primordial cognitions, or pseud-ideas, are homogeneous entities which may be differentiated objectively or subjectively, according as they are presented as Noumenon or Phenomenon. Or, in other words, they are only cognoscible as a colligation of incongruous coalescences" ("The Travelling Companions").

[1] Talleyrand said: "Ce diable d'homme trompe sur tous les points. Ses passions mêmes vous échappent; car il trouve encore le moyen de les feindre, quoiqu'elles existent réellement."

"Il semblait de la meilleure humeur du monde; je le remarquai. . . . Bonaparte se mit à rire, et continua ses jeux avec l'enfant. Tout à coup, on vint l'avertir que le cercle était formé. Alors, se relevant brusquement et la gaieté disparaissant de ses lèvres, je fus frappée de l'expression sévère qui la remplaça subitement, son teint parut presque pâlir à sa volonté, ses traits se contractèrent, et tout en moins de temps que je ne mets à le conter. En prononçant d'une voix émue ces seuls mots: 'Allons, mesdames!' il marcha précipitamment, entra dans le salon, et, ne saluant personne, il s'avança vers l'ambassadeur d'Angleterre." Thus began the celebrated scene, at the end of which, "le flegme de l'Anglais en fut même déconcerté, et il eut beaucoup de peine à trouver des paroles pour lui répondre." ("Mémoires de Madame de Rémusat," i. 117-120.)

[2] "Sketches and Essays" (1839 edition), p. 44.

[3] From Ransom's bank the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird practised vice, and preached the Old Testament to Lord Byron, whom he exhorted to write Hebrew Melodies.

watching in tragic contemplation of the ribald nightmare, judging and condemning the transient self with the surrounding crew.

He often talked of Napoleon, of whom he was a great admirer, and said that what he most liked in his character was his want of sympathy, which proved his knowledge of man, as those only could possess sympathy who were in happy ignorance of human nature.[1]

> "Tu grandis sans plaisir, tu tombas sans murmure,
> Rien d'humain ne battait sous ton épaisse armure :
> Sans haine et sans amour, tu vivais pour penser ;
> Comme l'aigle régnant dans un ciel solitaire,
> Tu n'avais qu'un regard pour mesurer la terre,
> Et des serres pour l'embrasser." [2]

His gift of creating emotion in himself and others was not more astonishing than the suddenness of its extinction. By that bewildering antinomy which is the only persistent fact observable in him, he could divest himself, or at least simulate being destitute of that poignant passion he so beautifully describes.

[1] Lady Blessington's "Conversations," etc., p. 132.

[2] Lamartine's "Bonaparte," as quoted in M. Albert Sorel's "Madame de Staël." She had written in the "Considérations sur la Révolution Française" : "Loin de me rassurer en voyant Bonaparte plus souvent, il m'intimidoit toujours davantage. Je sentois confusément qu'aucune émotion du cœur ne pouvoit agir sur lui. Il regarde une créature humaine comme un fait ou comme une chose, mais non comme un semblable. Il ne hait plus qu'il n'aime ; il n'y a que lui pour lui ; tout le reste des créatures sont des chiffres. La force de sa volonté consiste dans l'imperturbable calcul de son égoïsme ; c'est un habile joueur d'échecs dont le genre humain est la partie adverse qu'il se propose de faire échec et mat. . . . Je sentois dans son âme une épée froide et tranchante qui glaçoit en blessant ; je sentois dans son esprit une ironie profonde à laquelle rien de grand ni de beau, pas même sa propre gloire, ne pouvoit échapper ; car il méprisoit la nation dont il vouloit les suffrages, et nulle étincelle d'enthousiasme ne se mêloit à son besoin d'étonner l'espèce humaine" (ii. 197-199).

Madame de Staël once (February, 1814) reproved Lord Byron for his want of human sympathy, in which he was a follower of Napoleon : "Si vous avez le tort de ne pas aimer l'espèce humaine il me semble qu'elle fait ce qu'elle peut pour se raccomoder avec vous par son suffrage—et la destinée n'a pas maltraité celui qu'elle a fait le premier poête de son siècle et tout le reste—traitez ceux qui vous admirent avec un peu plus de bienveillance et sachez moi gré de pardonner à votre génie tout ce qui a dû me déplaire en vous—je voudrais causer avec vous quand m'en trouverez vous digne ? "—

Lord Byron almost disliked Madame de Staël at their first acquaintance in 1813 ; but in 1816 he warmly appreciated her cordial welcome to him in Switzerland, at the time he was shunned by fair-weather friends.

Lady Blessington observed in Lord Byron a candour in talking of his own defects, nay, a seeming pleasure in dwelling on them, that she never remarked in any other person. She told him this one day, and he answered: "Well, does not that give you hopes of my amendment?" Her reply was: "No. I fear, by continually recapitulating them, you will get so accustomed to their existence, as to conquer your disgust of them. You remind me of Belcour in 'The West Indian,' when he exclaims: 'No one sins with more repentance or repents with less amendment than I do.'" It appeared to her that the consciousness of his own defects rendered him still less tolerant to those of others.[1]

Goethe said that Byron but dimly understood himself, ever living from hour to hour and passion to passion, he knew not and cared not what he did;[2] but "the like would never come again."[3] There was in him a high degree of that daemonic instinct and attraction which influences others independently of reason, effort, or affection, which sometimes succeeds in guiding where the understanding fails.[4]

An eye-witness wrote:

"If you had seen Lord Byron you could scarcely disbelieve him—so beautiful a countenance I scarcely

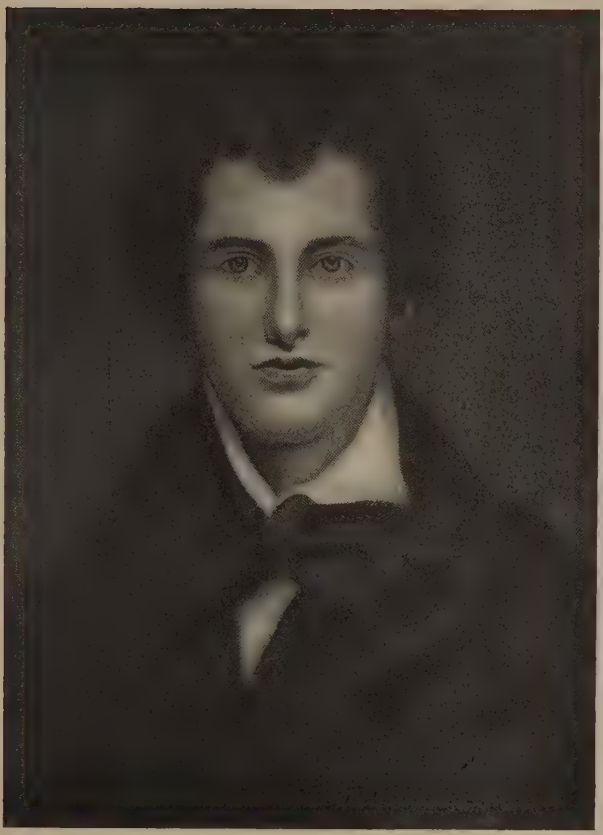
[1] "Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron," pp. 118, 110. Compare Coleridge, than whom "nobody could lecture more sagaciously on his own defects, point out the evil results, and even suggest the remedy" (*vide* Sir Leslie Stephen in "The New Review," 1895). "Coleridge has such a complete self-knowledge, mixed with intellectual complacency, that he takes a lively interest in contemplating his own shortcomings, and has a 'consequent slowness in amending them.' When there is a dispute at home, Mrs. Coleridge will never see that she is wrong, which seems strangely unreasonable to the husband. He, meanwhile, seeing with singular clearness that he is also wrong, will not take the trouble to improve, which to the wife seems equally unreasonable. Having expounded the theory of the situation with undeniable lucidity, Coleridge assumes that the evil is as good as amended."

Naturally Coleridge attained virtue and final happiness by swallowing oblivion and metaphysics in regions inaccessible to Mrs. Coleridge.

[2] "Er war zu dunkel über sich selbst. Er lebte immer leidenschaftlich in den tag hin und wuszte und bedachte nichte, was er that" (To Eckermann, February 24th, 1825).

[3] To Crabb Robinson, August, 1829.

[4] In conversation with Eckermann, March 8th, 1831.



LORD BYRON ON LEAVING HARROW

After a Painting given by him to Dr. Drury

ever saw . . . his eyes the open portals of the sun—things of light and for light—" [1]

Another description says :

" His eyes, though of a light grey, were capable of all extremes of expression, from the most joyous hilarity to the deepest sadness, from the very sunshine of benevolence to the most concentrated scorn or rage, [as] I once had an opportunity of seeing [on his] suddenly turning round upon me with a look of such intense anger, as, though it lasted not an instant, could not easily be forgot, and of which no better idea can be given than in the words of one who, speaking of Chatterton's eyes, says that fire rolled at the bottom of them.[2]

It might, perhaps, be said that his eyes were placed too near his nose, and that one was rather smaller than the other ; they were of a greyish brown, but of a peculiar clearness, and when animated possessed a fire which seemed to look through and penetrate the thoughts of others, while they marked the inspirations of his own." [3]

Sir Thomas Lawrence wrote in 1822 :

" In Lord Byron's countenance you see all the character ; its keen and rapid genius, its pale intelligence, its profligacy and its bitterness—its original symmetry distorted by the passions, his laugh of mingled merriment and scorn—the forehead clear and open, the brow boldly prominent, the eyes bright and *dissimilar*, the nose finely cut, and the nostril *acutely* formed—the mouth well formed, but wide, and contemptuous even in its smile, falling singularly at the corners,[4] and its vindictive and disdainful expression heightened by the massive firmness of the chin, which springs at once

[1] Coleridge (April 10th, 1816), Gilman's " Life," Pickering, 1838, p. 236.

[2] " Letters and Journals of Lord Byron," by Thomas Moore, 2 vols. quarto, 1830, Vol. II., 798.

[3] " Conversations of Lord Byron," by Thomas Medwin, Esq^e., p. 8.

[4] Like the " beaucoup de mépris . . . dans les deux coins pendants de la bouche " of M. de Talleyrand, according to the description in the " Mémoires d'Outre Tombe."

from the centre of the full underlip—the hair dark and curling, but irregular in its growth; all this presents to you the poet and the man, and the general effect is aided by a thin spare form, and, as you may have heard, by a deformity of limb." [1]

Chantrey, however, remarked "the soft voluptuous character of the lower part of his face, and the firmness of the upper part." [2]

Still more remarkable than the magic of love (Liebeszauber) was his power of paralyzing and fascinating with a peculiar "sort of *under* look he used to give." In consequence of her awe of this glance, Lady Rosebery (afterwards Mildmay) was terrified to meet Lord Byron, and "once, when he spoke to her in a doorway, her heart beat so violently that she could hardly answer him." [3]

The superstitious horror felt by some almost touched veneration. A friend of Lady Byron's family, Lady Liddell (afterwards the first Lady Ravensworth), who

[1] "Life of Sir Thomas Lawrence," by D. E. Williams, 1831, ii. 70.

Lord Byron mentioned (in a journal of seven years later) having met Lawrence the painter one evening in 1814 when he had dined with Earl Grey and heard one of the daughters of the house play on the harp. "Well, I would rather have had my talk with Lawrence (who talked delightfully) and heard the girl, than have had all the fame of Moore," etc. (Moore's Quarto, ii. 410).

"Lawrence once made a sketch in ink of Byron's head, which he sent to a friend, a beautiful woman named Mrs. Wolff" ("Sir Thomas Lawrence," by Lord Ronald Gower).

[2] Moore's Diary, v. 189.

[3] See Moore's Diary, iii. 247.

Harriet, second daughter of the Hon. Bartholomew Bouverie, was married first to the Earl of Rosebery, and divorced in 1815, and was married secondly, at Stuttgardt in 1815, to her brother-in-law, Sir Henry Mildmay.

Another half-Celt—Gladstone—had an eye "fierce, luminous, restless, and with dangerous symptoms of possible insanity," the glance of which was "piercing as a stab to the heart" (*vide* Mr. Lecky's Introduction to the new edition of "Democracy and Liberty").

But no one perhaps ever intimidated those who approached him anything like what is described of Napoleon, with Madame de Staël, Augereau, and even Vandamme: "un autre soudard révolutionnaire plus énergique et plus brutal encore qu'Augereau. En 1815 Vandamme disait au maréchal d'Ornano un jour qu'ils montaient ensemble l'escalier des Tuileries, 'Mon cher, ce diable d'homme (il parlait de l'Empereur) exerce sur moi une fascination dont je ne puis me rendre compte. C'est au point que moi, qui ne crains ni Dieu, ni diable, quand je l'approche, je suis prêt à trembler comme un enfant; il me ferait passer par le trou d'une aiguille pour aller me jeter dans le feu" (*vide* Taine's "Le Régime Moderne," vol. i., pp. 17-21).

had never seen Lord Byron, suddenly came upon him on the roof of St. Peter's at Rome, while walking with her daughter and friends. In a moment it struck her who it was :

" And what came over me I cannot describe, but I felt ready to sink, and stood as if my feet were rooted to the ground, looking at him, as Mr. Blakeney told me, as if I were horror-struck."

Lady Liddell was so alarmed at the terrible reprobate that she insisted on her daughter (Maria, afterwards Marchioness of Normanby) keeping her eyes down, saying, " Don't look at him, he is dangerous to look at."

Southey told Henry Taylor he had a vivid remembrance of first meeting Byron. There was an insidious softness in Byron's manner which made Southey compare it at the time to a tiger patting something which had not angered him with his paw, the talons being all sheathed ; " and the prevailing expression in his fine countenance was something which distrusted you, and which it could never have been possible for you or me to trust." [1] This first impression was so strongly confirmed the three or four times he saw him after this, that at last Southey could not be persuaded into another meeting with Byron.

For a long time Lord Byron was almost totally boycotted by the English in Switzerland and Italy, with a few honourable exceptions, the most striking of which were Lord and Lady Jersey, who would not be turned away from an old friend by a ubiquitous intriguer. The taboo of Lord Byron had been ably organized at Geneva and Milan by Brougham, comedian to the Whig party and mischief-maker general.[2]

An old novel-writing lady, Elizabeth Hervey, sister of " Vathek " Beckford, tried hard to faint at Madame de Staël's on the unexpected arrival of Lord Byron. She wrote from Geneva (August 1st, 1816) :

[1] From a letter of Henry Taylor, March 3rd, 1830.

[2] " That indescribable wretch Brougham," as O'Connell said in 1844—not without ground.

"The sight of him quite disordered me, and he affected tender melancholy and much agitation. I could not prevent his seizing my hands, but I behaved to him the whole time of his stay with the most marked coldness in despite of all the pains he took to conciliate me, and these were noticed by everybody. . . .

"By the charms of his wit, his harmonious voice, and fascinating manner, he completely enchanted Madame de Staël without ever being able to change the bad opinion she has of his morals."

The influence of women on Lord Byron's life is of course very traceable, without being at all remarkable in the generation to which he belonged, or specially characteristic of him. It should be remembered that all through the eighteenth century, and for the first third of the nineteenth, seductions and all the similar pursuits formed a great, almost the principal part of the life of rich Englishmen, without any offence being given to the moral feelings of the community. The greatest nobles, such as Lord Pembroke (died 1794), who was well known for his elopement with Miss Kitty Hunter, "but universally esteemed as an accomplished nobleman," the Earl Bishop of Derry, the Duke of Devonshire, who died in 1811, Lord Egremont, Lord Hertford, and, not least, Lord Darlington, were all, to use the phrase of Wraxall, "well known in the annals of meretricious pleasure." Chastity and sobriety were thought ridiculous. As Lady Byron once wrote towards the close of her life: "A kind of ridicule attaches to the differences between man and wife." [1]

[1] "Mrs. Norton will be cleared I think by her pamphlet, and by Ld. M.'s letters—so conclusive—but she must have *waited*—

"*Domestic* Martyrdoms have been less sympathized with than any others—partly because a kind of Ridicule (why ?) attaches to the differences between man & Wife—" (Lady Noel Byron to Eliza Follen, April 18th, 1854 (?)).

"Le monde, dont les jugements sont rarement tout à fait faux, voit une sorte de ridicule à être vertueux quand on n'y est pas obligé par un devoir professionel. Le prêtre, ayant pour état d'être chaste, comme le soldat d'être brave, est, d'après ces idées, presque le seul qui puisse sans ridicule tenir à des principes sur lesquels la morale et la mode se livrent les plus étranges combats. Il est hors de doute qu'en ce point, comme en beaucoup d'autres, mes principes cléricaux, conservés

More than once the love of a woman for Byron—said by her to be stronger than death—decomposed into hatred more bitter than the grave. In a trance of fear she would see a dark transfiguration from hero to monster, and in a delusion of loathing, might thus speak to him :

" In Francesco Cenci you may behold yourself some twenty years hence ! "

The constitution of his body and mind had destined him to his swift and feverish pilgrimage from family, country, friends, mankind, and life.

" In the *post-mortem* examination it was found that the Sutures were quite obliterated—a change which only takes place at a late age. There was also (which was not stated) incipient ossification of heart—' the madness of the heart.' " [1]

The great man who keenly followed his career from a distance, and understood him with the wisdom of genius and experience, once exclaimed :

" If only Lord Byron had known how to set moral limits for himself ! That he could not was his overthrow, and it may very well be said that he went to ruin because he was utterly unbridled. Taking his own course ' along the line of limitless desires,' and approving of nothing in anyone else, he was sure of destruction, certain to raise up a whole world against himself. He had started by offending the foremost literary potentates. In order to live without lifelong war, he must afterwards have given way a little ; instead of which he went

dans le siècle, m'ont nui aux yeux du monde. Ils ne m'ont pas nui pour le bonheur " (" Souvenirs de jeunesse," Renan, p. 360).

" Plus tard, je vis bien la vanité de cette vertu comme de toutes les autres, je reconnus, en particulier, que la nature ne tient pas du tout à ce que l'homme soit chaste. Je n'en persistai pas moins, par convenance, dans la vie que j'avais choisie, et je m'imposai les mœurs d'un pasteur protestant " (*Ibid.*, p. 359).

" Je ne peux m'ôter l'idée que c'est peut-être après tout le libertin qui a raison et qui pratique la vraie philosophie de la vie " (*Ibid.*, p. 149).

Renan sometimes amused himself with the fancy that we are all the dupes of a wily power lurking in nature (" une puissance rusée, qui nous exploite "). We are thus decoyed into virtues and sacrifices that are of no use to us, but serve hidden ends for which we might care little and still less understand.

[1] Such is Lady Byron's statement in one of her papers.

further and further in his opposition and disapproval; he respected neither State nor Church. This reckless energy banished him from England, and must in time have banished him from Europe. It was everywhere too close for him, and with boundless personal licence he felt himself confined; the world was for him a prison. His retreat to Greece was no voluntary act; it was a false relation to the world that drove him thither.[1] Not only did abjuration of all prescriptive or patriotic obligations prove personally disastrous to so remarkable a being, but his revolutionary animus and consequent eternal restlessness of mind hindered the proper development of his talent." [2]

Goethe's comprehension of Byron, whom he had never seen, particularly struck Lady Byron, who was rather repelled than attracted by Goethe. She wrote (September 24th, 1854):

"Crabb Robinson told me what he called 'some strange mistaken notions of Goethe's respecting Lord Byron,' as an instance that one poet did not perfectly understand the other.

"But they were *true*—and prove wonderful insight. I could not say so to Mr. Robinson, whose own ideas of Lord Byron are very far from the truth I am persuaded."

One coincidence occurs between what Goethe said of "Lara," which he thought "bordered on the kingdom of spectres," [3] and Lady Byron's own remark to Lord Byron himself about that poem:

"One of the conversations he then held with me turned upon the subject of his poems, and—tacitly between us—of their allusions to himself. He said of 'Lara,' 'There's more in *that* than any of them,' shuddering and avoiding my eye. I said it had a stronger

[1] Lady Blessington wrote: "He so often turned with a yearning heart to his wish of going to England before Greece, that we asked him why, being a free agent, he did not go. The question seemed to embarrass him, he stammered, blushed and said: 'Why, true, there is no reason why I should not go, but yet I want resolution to encounter all the disagreeable circumstances which might and most probably would greet my arrival in England.'"

[2] Goethe's "Conversation with Eckermann," February 24th, 1825.

[3] Conversation with Ticknor, October 25th, 1816.

mysterious effect than any, and was 'like the darkness in which one fears to behold spectres.' The remark struck him as accidentally more characteristic than he thought I could know it to be—at least I presume so from his singular commendation of it with the usual mysterious manner. He often said that 'Lara' was the most metaphysical of his works." [1]

Lord Byron's literary activity was accidental. He told Lady Byron that if she had married him when he first proposed, he should not have written any of the poems which followed "Childe Harold"; and once at Halnaby he observed that no one who was naturally meant for a poet could have had so much solitude without making more verses. He was strongly impressed with the idea that celebrity rapidly acquired is seldom permanent. The very favourable reception of "Childe Harold" had been quite unexpected to him. His estimation of his own works was below that of the public.

[1] Narrative F, March, 1817. [Lady Byron's statements will be found frequently thus referred to under various initials, and it must not be inferred that —as suggested by a hostile critic—they were as numerous as the letters of the alphabet. The initials were those used by the author to indicate the various portions of materials from which he quoted. There are in fact only two *important* narratives by Lady Byron of her married life. The first one, which was prepared in January, 1816, for Lady Noel's preliminary discussions with Dr. Lushington, gave a long and very minute account of Byron's words and actions, but omitted anything that could incriminate Mrs. Leigh. When it is necessary to speak of Byron's avowals of passion, the object is simply alluded to as "another woman." In this first narrative the obsession as to his possible insanity is very manifest. The second narrative is mainly occupied with the story of Byron's conduct to Augusta and his constant avowals about her to Lady Byron. It was apparently begun some time before Mrs. Leigh's confession, which took place in September, 1816, and not finished until the following March. It is very fragmentary; some interpolations being on very small bits of notepaper. Many letters of the alphabet were used up in particularising these small interpolations. Many years later, apparently about 1854, Lady Byron projected a long and full narrative of all that she had known and seen of Byron from the first day of their acquaintance, which should embody her original stories of 1816 and 1817; but though more than one abortive version of this later narrative exists, none was ever completed. The author of "Astarte" may have culled here and there a few sidelights on Byron's character from these later writings, but for the main story that he had to tell he relied upon the narratives of 1816-17; his other materials being quotations from letters, and stray memoranda written by Lady Byron at different times on Byron's poetry. He did not regard the presentation of Lady Byron's narratives *in their entirety* to the public as possible, but in his own narrative he has reproduced the greater part of them very closely.—Ed.]

His feelings and sympathies were only kindled by what he could identify with himself. In all the characters on which he had any inclination to dwell, there were, at least in his imagination, resemblances to himself, for instance, Rousseau, or Napoleon.[1]

Lord Byron could describe nothing which he had not actually had under his eyes, and not even then unless either done on the spot or immediately after. He wrote only from *impressions*, which, after all, as Lord Holland replied to Moore's criticisms, was the sign of a true poet.[2]

Lord Byron's command of words was his resource in failure to command men. He was a man of words in consequence of physical limitations—a man of words and a tragic jester—but a man of force by nature. But command over words was exercised in a spirit of dominion over men. Like Napoleon, he no more loved than he hated his kind; he was a determined rebel against them, who craved to subdue them—or at least to be an object of wonder and terror. Without study or effort he became a literary enchanter—of fleeting might. As explained by Goethe, the world of feeling and the physical world seemed transparent to him. He knew them by anticipation before acquaintance.[3] He formed it all into words without reflection and by intuition, as women get beautiful offspring, they know not how.[4] His views of nature were profound and poetical and so were those he

[1] Miss Randall said how much she had been struck by the resemblance between Lord Byron's smile and Buonaparte's (Moore's Diary, iii. 232).

"M. Molé dit qu'il n'a jamais vu de sourire plus aimable, ou du moins plus distingué, plus fin, que celui de Napoléon et celui de Chateaubriand. Mais ni l'un ni l'autre ne souriaient tous les jours" (Sainte Beuve, "Chateaubriand," V^me^ Leçon, p. 152).

The substance of these two paragraphs is from Lady Byron's Statements, L, F, etc.

[2] Moore's Diary, iii. 248.

[3] "Dasz ihm die welt durchsichtig sei, und dasz ihm ihre darstellung durch anticipation möglich," etc., etc. ("Conversation with Eckermann," February 26th, 1824).

[4] "Aber alles was er produciren mag, gelingt ihm, und man kann wirklich sagen, dasz sich bei ihm die inspiration an die stelle der reflexion setzt. . . . Zu seinen sachen kam er wie die weiber zu schönen kindern; sie denken nicht daran und wissen nicht wie!" ("Conversation with Eckermann," February 24th, 1825).

took of the Bible ; but for the latter he was indebted to the *ennui* he suffered from it at school.[1] The dogmas of the Church were insufficient for a free spirit like Byron, and " Cain " shows how he shook off the doctrines that had been lavished on him.[2]

Goethe, who " was by no means addicted to contradiction," passed over the defects of Byron's workmanship. He spoke of the brilliancy and clearness of his style, saying : " There is no padding in his poetry." [3] He said that his poetry showed great knowledge of human nature and great talent in description.[4] With every fresh reading he appreciated Lord Byron's talent more highly, but at the same time probed his fundamental incapacity to be a really great man. His hypochondria and negation excluded him from supreme genius.[5] Goethe especially praised " The Deformed Transformed." He dwelt much on Lord Byron's everlasting opposition and discontent, and how much the best of his works had suffered from it.

" For not only does the discomfort of the poet spread to the reader, but all work of opposition degenerates into negation, and negation is void. If I say evil is evil, what is gained ? but if perchance I take good for evil, great harm is done. Whoever would work right must never scold, or be in trouble over things perverted, but simply do what is good. We should not care to pull down, but to build up, what will inspire mankind with unsullied joy." [6]

At the time of the publication of " Manfred," the readers of Lord Byron's poetry felt as if they were receiving confidential disclosures. The reader forgets for the time that he is but one of the public to whom the feelings are thus revealed.[7]

" Or may not each " (wrote Lady Byron, Septem-

[1] Conversation with Crabb Robinson, August, 1829.
[2] Conversation with Eckermann, February 24th, 1824.
[3] Conversation with Crabb Robinson, August, 1829.
[4] Conversation with Ticknor, October 25th, 1816.
[5] Conversation with Eckermann, November 8th, 1826.
[6] Conversation with Eckermann, February 24th, 1825.
[7] Lady Byron's Journal of September 14th, 1818, mentions this as the best idea of a recent article in the " Edinburgh Review."

ber 14th, 1818), " each of the children of passion at least, feel that he understands the nature of the confession so much more intimately than the colder multitude, that to him it is really private ? It conveys a mystical sense—so I have felt."

Lord Byron seems to have been, like the fair-haired Eckbert of Tieck's story, seized with the longing to unbosom himself wholly to the public, as to a friend, that so it might become his friend still more. When he thus opened the inmost recesses of his heart in verses, " that wonderful poetry affected its readers like an evil potion taken into their blood."

" The small sweet draught which I sipped . . . remained indelibly impressed on my memory." [1]

When Byron passed to

> " The things that were—and what and whence were they ?
> Those clouds and rainbows of thy yesterday ?
> Their path has vanished from the eternal sky,"

and gradually his " shadow lengthens but to fade," that boundless appreciation of his poetry, which was in the main extra-literary, also faded away. The vitality of his writings had depended mainly on his own vivid existence of agitations, errors, illusions, loves, hates, and catastrophes.

All levity vanishes from the closing scenes of his life of passion, mirth, and disaster, when he vainly tried to articulate messages [2] to his wife, herself both a victim and an instrument [3] of the furies [4] who had haunted his

[1] " Records of a Girlhood," by Frances Anne Kemble, vol. i., p. 91.

[2] Fletcher was desired by Lord Byron to go to her the day before he died, but for what purpose could not be articulated.

[3] " Yours has been a bitter connection to me in every sense ; it would have been better for me never to have been born than to have ever seen you. This sounds harsh, but is it not true ? and recollect I do not mean that you were my *intentional* evil Genius but an Instrument for my destruction, and you yourself have suffered too (poor thing) in the agency, as the lightning perishes in the instant with the oak that it strikes " (Lord Byron to Lady Byron, January 11th, 1821).

[4] " My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled by the Furies."
" Manfred," Act II., Scene 2.

existence. But even at the last his indomitable spirit was not conquered.

> " 'Tis over—my dull eyes can fix thee not;
> But all things swim around me, and the earth
> Heaves as it were beneath me—Fare thee well."
>
> " I'll die as I have lived—alone." [1]

Those who have access to the best information are sure of nothing in the character of Lord Byron. He struck out for his life, exulting in his blows with a " cry of savage gladness," but it was at least rash to assume that

> " No grief is thine, no moody madness
> In that mysterious bosom found." [2]

The character of Augusta Byron is far simpler to read in her letters and actions. She was a woman of that great family—often very lovable—which is vague about facts, unconscious of duties, impulsive in conduct. The course of her life could not be otherwise explained, by those who had looked into it with close intimacy, than by " a kind of moral idiotcy from birth." [3]

She was of a sanguine and buoyant disposition, childishly fond and playful, ready to laugh at anything, loving to talk nonsense. The great charm of her society was a refined species of comic talent. She had kind feelings and good intentions without principles; she received a strict moral and pietistic training, but its influence on her life was limited to a prodigal and sometimes inappropriate use of devout phrases. When she confessed all in September, 1816, she *said* she blamed herself more for her guilt because of the principles she had had instilled into her early.

A friend [4] who had loved her from childhood wrote (July 9th, 1816): " I think I am justified in saying *very* confidently that her mind *was* purity and innocence itself," but her moral ideas were to the greatest degree

[1] " Manfred," Act III., Scene 4.
[2] Lines addressed to Lord Byron by Robert Wilmot, April, 1816.
[3] Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, May 11th, 1852.
[4] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers.

confused. She did not feel that there was much harm in anything which made no one unhappy. Lady Byron once wrote :[1] "I have observed the remarkable difference that his feelings, distinct from practice, were much more sensitive and correct on all moral questions than hers." On the side of virtue she was weak, but the character was not altogether weak, rather incomplete. She was shy and timid, and there was great apparent facility and yieldingness, but in emergencies she could be steadfast and act with considerable courage. She had a sort of good feeling that led her to risk her own skin for some who needed it, and for whom she cared more or less. But there was always a blend of artificial sentiment. She excelled in simulation ; herself she could persuade of almost anything. She feigned without thinking, perhaps felt what she feigned, unmindful of tangible truths at unsuitable seasons. "There was apparently an absence of all deep feeling in her mind, of everything on which a strong impression could be made."[2] With instinctive craft and courage she fought for self-preservation—a life-long battle—hopeless and lost owing to fundamental mistakes and untrustworthy associates. She was great in the cleverness of expedients, full of plausible sophistry, of smooth disparagement, pretending altruism whilst really acting for herself without incurring any responsibility.

She was abominably married to a first cousin—impracticable,[3] helpless,[4] tiresome and obstructive. She was more than any one sensible how intolerable her husband was with his debts and selfishness, which had a large share in bringing on the final ruin of the whole family.[5] He was little with her, being generally at race meetings or on long visits to Lord Darlington [6] and other

[1] To the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, June 28th, 1816.

[2] Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, October 17th, 1851.

[3] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, July 18th, 1816.

[4] "That very helpless gentleman, your cousin," as Lord Byron calls him in a letter to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh of September 17th, 1816. [See Chap. XI.]

[5] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, March 9th, 1841.

[6] The life at Lord Darlington's in the time of his first wife, who died 1807, is described by Lady Byron's mother (then the Hon. Mrs. Milbanke) in a letter to

AUGUSTA LEIGH

From a Sketch by George Hayter (1812).

reprobates, protectors and boon companions. When Newmarket races brought Colonel Leigh home, Mrs. Leigh went off on a holiday if she could. He was a trying and exacting inmate. Everything had to be done for him, not the least of which was his turfy correspondence. He was *quite* capable of acquiescing in her going away for any purpose, temporarily or otherwise.[1]

Long habits of concealment made it difficult to judge of her feelings by her manner.[2] For years and down to her death she was "under the necessity of acting what she did not feel."[3] She was almost always collected and prepared to repel suspicion,[4] and at the same time "her horror of the crime was already not too great."[5] She was strangely insensible to the nature and magnitude of the offence in question even as an imputation. "She did not appear to think these transgressions of consequence."[6]

In one or two points there was a resemblance of character to Rousseau's account of Madame de Warens, who was naturally pure of heart and fitted for an irreproachable life, which she always desired for its own sake, but never realized in practice, because she came to look on conjugal fidelity as the most indifferent act in itself, regarding only public opinion, and to regard a woman who outwardly appeared virtuous as really so, by the mere absence of all offence or unhappiness to anyone.[7]

her aunt, Mary Noel (December 23rd, 1797): "We stayed two nights at Raby Castle, you know it is a visit of duty, and we are always glad when it is over, however we escaped much wine this time as My Lord had the Gripes and could not drink; we succeeded the Liddells & Sir Thomas who hates drinking was never permitted to rise from table till past midnight any one day for a week—Lord D. plunges deeper and deeper in low Amours & got into a terrible scrape at Dunbar when there with his Regiment—he went into the room of a Servant Girl at the Inn & attempted violence, the poor Girl threw herself out of window and was so much hurt that She will be a Cripple for life, this is one of many Stories equally to his credit—"

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, May 18th, 1816.

[2] Anne Wilmot to Lady Byron, July 31st, 1816.

[3] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, July 27th, 1816.

[4] Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, June 28th, 1816.

[5] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, September 12th, 1816.

[6] Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, June 28th, 1816.

[7] "Elle étoit bien née, son cœur étoit pur, elle aimoit les choses honnêtes, ses penchans étoient droits et vertueux, son goût étoit délicat; elle étoit faite pour une élégance de mœurs qu'elle a toujours aimée et qu'elle n'a jamais suivie,

Augusta's expressions of conscious innocence to her friends were wonderful.[1] "She named the report concerning her with the pride of Innocence!—as it is called—"[2]

Outwardly she affected extreme prudery, and after alighting on one unlucky passage, said she would not open "Don Juan" again "for fear her delicate feelings should be shocked by stumbling again on a Shipwrecke."[3] Lord Byron wrote to her: "I am delighted to see *you* grown so *moral*. It is edifying."

She had a language of her own, that of half fact, half fiction; that in which the most definite actions are blurred or obliterated under an ambiguous mist of hints, parentheses, inuendoes, dashes, "megrims, mysteries," and as Lord Byron used to add, "d—d crinkum crankum."

"For the life of me I can't make out whether your disorder is a broken heart or ear-ache—or whether it is *you* that have been ill or the children—or what your melancholy & mysterious apprehensions tend to—or refer to—whether to Caroline Lamb's novels—Mrs Clermont's evidence—Lady Byron's magnanimity—or any other piece of impossture."[4]

In Augusta's idiom blood shame is translated into "I have been most unfortunate in all my nearest connections."[5] *Unfortunate!* When she writes: "None can know *how much* I have suffered from this unhappy

parce qu'au lieu d'écouter son cœur, qui la menoit bien, elle écouta sa raison qui la menoit mal."

Madame de Warens was persuaded to regard "l'union des sexes comme l'acte le plus indifférent en soi; la fidelité conjugale, comme une apparence obligatoire dont toute la moralité regardoit l'opinion; le repos des maris, comme la seule règle du devoir des femmes; en sorte que les infidelités ignorées, nulles pour celui qu'elles offensoient, l'étoient aussi pour la conscience; enfin il lui persuada que la chose en elle-même n'étoit rien, qu'elle ne prenoit d'existence que par le scandale, et que toute femme qui paroissoit sage par cela l'étoit en effet" ("Les Confessions," première partie, livre v.).

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, May 9th, 1816.
[2] Lady Byron's Statement G.
[3] Words in a letter of Lord Byron's to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh.
[4] Lord Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, June 3rd, 1817.
[5] Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, March 29th, 1826.

business"—the real meaning is that detection of her secret is imminent. Substitution of herself for Lord Byron's right heirs becomes "unnatural conduct in *them*," and she is sick of them and the subject.

After her final rupture with her sister-in-law she used to proclaim that nothing could justify Lady Byron in abandoning her husband. Augusta's indignation was about three quarters sincere; but she kept back a little bit of information for want of which her language altogether missed the truth. Naturally enough she could not name the real obstacle between Lord and Lady Byron—that was herself, Augusta. Accordingly she suppressed a troublesome particle of truth, which in her eyes only rendered Lady Byron still more odious now that the bondage of gratitude had been shaken off.

She lived in the impulse of the moment; saw what had been in the specious restorations of her fabric of truth,—her outlet for imperative present necessities. If a fact grew into an obstruction, it must no longer be a fact. Some women can thus delete their own past in good faith, or very nearly so.

She worked her friends well—frequently induced them by partial statements which they believed made with the most unreserved confidence, to give the very worst advice possible,[1] and take part in her concerns upon a perfect persuasion of her innocence.[2] In numerous instances they were made accessory to her doing the very things she ought most to have avoided.[3]

Her actions necessarily became regulated by self-deceit as to herself and suspicion as to others.[4] There had been a day when she "foolishly imagined she had not such a thing as an enemy." She came to think that there were many who would make out everything in an ill-natured light against her.[5] Even when unattacked, she lived in a state of morbid anxiety for a

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, May 18th, 1816.
[2] The same to the same, July 18th, 1816.
[3] The same to the same, May 18th, 1816.
[4] Robert John Wilmot to Lady Byron, May 29th, 1816.
[5] The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron, December 22nd, 1816.

defence, and instead of persisting in a policy of silence, she became ready to accuse anyone, under the preoccupation of making a case for herself.[1] Fancying enemies everywhere, she exhibited a character of hardness.[2] She also grew more and more wary, and resorted more habitually to subterfuges for fencing off embarrassing inquiries. She would pretend to be in a hurry, or studiously forget or postpone the most momentous topics, till the fag end of a conversation or a letter.

Sometimes she would simply wait till children or servants were in the room and heard all that was said, which gave her the opportunity herself to introduce the subject on which she expected questions, and drop it altogether after a few superficial words. Even when she could not divert a *vivâ voce* discussion of her concerns, it required great energy on the part of friends to protract a conversation she was desirous of discontinuing, as she was very adroit in letting questions or zealous interest in her affairs perish of inanition.[3]

She could make a good fight for herself in other ways—sometimes made painful scenes, accusing some in whose power she might be to a certain extent, or at least think she was, of unkindness, prejudice, or treachery. In some cases she was wisely suspicious, in others mistakenly so, and she could be very rancorous in her resentment for unfavourable opinions about herself. She showed much anger against those who had friendly relations with her real or supposed enemies. These sentiments led her to quarrel with and insult some who were not ill-disposed towards her, and even to alienate friends and relations. She violently resented the most moderate criticism in any matter that was even remotely connected with her peculiar position. On her own part, she did not abstain from provocation. This state of mind resulted in a bitter quarrel with Lady Noel Byron, and

[1] Robert John Wilmot to Lady Byron, May 29th, 1816.
[2] Colonel Francis Hastings Doyle to Lady Byron, July 9th, 1816.
[3] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, June 19th, 1816, July 12th, 1816, and February 23rd, 1817.

also with Admiral Lord Byron and his wife, and interrupted intimate relations with Sir Robert and Lady Wilmot Horton and Mrs. Villiers.

Strange to say, there was more vacillation about Lady Caroline Lamb, whom she hated and had reason to hate beyond anyone else, knowing she had done more than anyone else to circulate the reports against her. On chance meetings Mrs. Leigh's manner towards Lady Caroline Lamb was that of hatred and horror openly displayed, but she ceased to cut her dead later, when Lady Caroline Lamb had changed her system, and actually denied the truth of reports spread by herself. Lady Caroline Lamb refused to be put off with a low and ironical curtsey. On one occasion she suddenly started up before Mrs. Leigh, as if from underground, and claimed acquaintance, whereupon, according to Mrs. Leigh's own account of the scene, she felt " compelled to touch Lady Caroline Lamb's hand." The key to this and many other inconsistencies is that, involved as Mrs. Leigh was by the many obliquities of her conduct, she was often obliged to act in a manner which variously appeared like imprudence or timidity ; when there were very different causes underneath.[1]

There would be no use in specifying all the causes of Mrs. Leigh's financial ruin, even if they were completely recorded. Her property, including that bequeathed by Lord Byron, largely passed into the hands of the money-lenders, of whom twenty-six came forward as claimants for everything after Mrs. Leigh's death. In her later years a more painful impersonation of anxious disquiet and misery could hardly be imagined. She rather suddenly became a very sunk and aged person. Her disposition had ever been such that no lasting impression could be made on her feelings. She lived through so much that at last she found herself growing callous at bottom like flint or steel. Her wits got darkened at intervals by judicial blindness, by a kind of fatuity which besets people burthened with a secret, and sooner or later

[1] Lady Noel Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, March 16th, 1841.

forces its disclosure. Her heart seemed frozen. But when she was dying, Lady Byron felt so great a desire to send her a message, that, after fully considering what might be the effects, Lady Byron determined to disregard all but those which it might possibly have upon Mrs. Leigh herself, and wrote to the daughter to whisper two words of affection long disused. This was a week before Mrs. Leigh's death, and on hearing the message, tears long dry flowed again with the joy of hearing once more "Dearest Augusta!" from Lady Byron. Mrs. Leigh said those words "were her greatest consolation"; and she went on to say a great deal that could not be heard distinctly, her voice had grown so weak and thick. Thus was another message lost, but there had been a speck of light in almost infinite darkness. Mrs. Leigh's sufferings were dreadful and continued to the very last. She died October 12th, 1851, of heart disease and dropsy, with her hands in those of her youngest daughter Emily who, she said, had always been such a comfort to her.[1]

Mrs. Leigh's distress for money had been so extreme that she even got money (from a publisher) for a box of Lord Byron's letters but told her daughter before she died that she wished them to be redeemed.[2] There never was apparently money enough to save the letters; some of them passed away for ever into the hands of strangers, and were ultimately made use of in the way which Mrs. Leigh most dreaded.

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Elizabeth Medora Leigh, February, 1831; Lady Noel Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, June 11th, 1841; to the Rev. F. W. Robertson, October 14th, 1851; and memorandum of April 8th, 1851; Emily Leigh to Lady Noel Byron, October 5th and October 13th, 1851.

[2] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Noel Byron, October 30th, 1851. See also Chap. XI., p. 264.

CHAPTER II

THREE STAGES OF LORD BYRON'S LIFE

"—when one ceased the other began—and now both are closed—" [1]

LORD BYRON TO LADY BYRON, 10bre 28th, 1820.

IN June, 1813, there was a crisis of insolvency at Mrs. Leigh's home, Six Mile Bottom, and she came to Lord Byron in London for an indefinite absence from home. He then gave up an arrangement he had made to travel to Sicily with Lady Oxford and her family—otherwise called the "Harleian Miscellany." Instead of this, he planned taking Augusta to Sicily, but this was relinquished in consequence of the remonstrances of Lady Melbourne, to whom he confided at that time most of the things he was engaged upon. Augusta had consented to go with him to Sicily, but Lady Melbourne dissuaded him from taking "this fatal step," saying: "You are on the brink of a precipice, and if you do not retreat, you are lost for ever—it is a crime for which there is no salvation in this world, whatever there may be in the next." She told him that, whatever he might affect, she knew how susceptible he was to opinion, and would he do that which must utterly destroy his character? She told him that, though destitute of principle, she believed him naturally generous and honourable, and remonstrated with him on the cruelty of depriving of all future peace or happiness a woman who had hitherto, whether deservedly or not, maintained a good reputation—and even if their distresses, after he had taken this fatal step, should arise from external causes, they would always reproach themselves for their reciprocal wretched-

[1] See page 111.

ness. His comment on this advice of Lady Melbourne's was : " She is a good woman after all, for there are things she will stop at." He followed Lady Melbourne's advice in part (as to Sicily), but not altogether. He once said : " Ah, I wish I had." [1]

Lady Melbourne, in order to get him out of this " *worse* business," encouraged him to start on a fresh intrigue, and gave him the most minute instructions about seducing another woman,[2] almost in the style of the Marquise de Merteuil, in " Les Liaisons Dangereuses." [3]

It is not wonderful that Lady Melbourne failed in keeping Byron and Augusta long apart.

> " We repent, we abjure, we will break from the chain ;
> We must part, we must fly—to unite it again ! "

It *had* been reunited for long months when he wrote those lines to Augusta, which are here quoted from the original MS. afterwards given to Lady Byron.

Lord Byron did not limit his confidences to Lady Melbourne. He used to give himself an unfortunate latitude in conversations with people, who, having no interest in his welfare, or any desire to *approfondir* whether his strange paradoxes were advanced by way of amusement or from his real way of thinking, repeated and circulated his speeches as he made them.[4] Early in 1814 he advanced at Holland House the most extraordinary theories about the relations of brothers and sisters.[5] This was the origin of reports against Mrs. Leigh's character, which were widely circulated at that time, without there having been any ill will to, or ill opinion of her.[6] These reports must also be attributed to " The Bride of Abydos," which rumour proclaimed to be a representation of Mrs. Leigh. Far and wide, people asked whether she had read it, and if she had recognized

[1] Lady Byron's Narrative F.
[2] [See Notes by the Editor, p. 315.]
[3] Lady Byron's Narrative F.
[4] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, April 25th, 1816.
[5] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, May 18th, 1816.
[6] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, April 23rd, 1816.

herself, what she had to say to its publication. In those days the poems of Lord Byron used to be searched with avidity for mysteries and sensations by old and young down to Eton boys. Schoolfellows at Eton taunted and questioned a nephew of Mrs. Leigh's about "The Bride of Abydos" and informed him of the stories in circulation. Lord Byron's recklessness did not stop at paradox and poetry. He gave hints in letters to more than one woman, and in conversation gave various intimations of a criminal intercourse with Mrs. Leigh. He did not for some time speak of it in a manner which fixed it with certainty upon her. He would say: "Oh, I never knew what it was before. There is a woman I love so passionately—she is with child by me, and if a daughter, it shall be called Medora." Gradually his avowals of this incestuous intercourse became bolder, he positively declared the crime and his delight in it:

"Too brief for our passion, too long for our peace,
Was that hour—Oh, when can its hope—can its memory cease?"

When it was objected, "I could believe it of *you*, but not of *her*," his vanity appeared to be piqued to rage, and he exclaimed, "Would *she* not?" It would appear that he used to say the seduction had not given him much trouble, that it was soon accomplished, and she was very willing; that in their early days they had been separated by Lady Holderness on account of some apparent impropriety. He recollected also asking his mother why he should not marry Augusta, the question being suggested by an anecdote of some *germana Jovis* in Roman history.[1]

On one occasion at the Albany Lord Byron was stated to have taken a number of letters from Mrs. Leigh out of his portfolio and shown them to a lady who was visiting him. She said she remembered expressions in those letters that must refer to such a connection. The letters

[1] The fourth Caesar publicly produced his own sister Drusilla as a lawful wife: *in modum justae propalam habuit*. Their grandmother Antonia is mentioned by Suetonius as the Lady Holderness of the early days of Caius Caligula and Drusilla.

contained much foolish levity, but occasionally there appeared feelings of remorse, such as: "Oh, B——, if we loved one another as we did in childhood—*then* it was innocent." But these feelings apparently became less frequent. Lord Byron's valet, Fletcher, appeared to be conscious of the crime.[1]

When Byron was about to be married, both he and Augusta meant to close the secret life of the last year and a half, and replace it by the purified adoration (almost as of another being) which he afterwards so beautifully expressed in the first two lines of "The Epistle":

> "My sister! my sweet sister! if a name
> Dearer and purer were, it should be thine."[2]

It was a difficult, an almost impossible resolution, but it seems probable that *she did* adhere to it. To Lady Melbourne he made every promise of amendment man could make on his engagement to her niece, but he was half-hearted in this perfectly sincere intention, and it was not persevered in. He was fond of quoting, "Returning were as tedious as go on," and he soon felt it intolerable to renounce his forbidden influence over Augusta:

> "And thine is that love which I would not forego,
> Though that heart may be bought by Eternity's woe."[3]

It would seem that none of Augusta's letters to Byron have been preserved, with one or two trifling exceptions. When he went abroad all her letters were left with other papers at Sir Benjamin Hobhouse's.[4] Some of these

[1] The above account of Lord Byron's conversations in 1813 and 1814 was given on March 27th, 1816, by a lady (not Lady Byron, of course) who had frequently been with him during those months. What has been quoted of her statements, from a memorandum made the same day, agrees with the things recorded elsewhere, which could hardly be the case unless her report of conversation were so far true; but it is only here given for what it is worth, as the lady in question was not in all respects trustworthy. But in this instance her information, being confirmed by that from other sources, is of sufficient interest for inclusion in an explanatory narrative.

[2] Further on these stanzas relapse into purely pagan passion.

[3] From the first draft of the fifth stanza of "I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name," in the MS. given to Lady Byron. [See Appendix B.]

[4] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, September 20th, 1816.

were returned to her after Lord Byron's death,[1] but whether they were all ultimately destroyed, or what became of them, is not recorded in Lady Byron's papers. Lord Byron, however, who after his marriage constantly talked of Augusta's letters with an air of mystery and a kind of fierce and exulting transport, gave one of these letters to Lady Byron.

Though trivial and childish, it is interesting in its babyish adoration and undemonstrative acquiescence in the approaching cutting of cakes and ringing of bells, which was to be in nineteen days. Whereupon Augusta just finds time for a word of smooth depreciation of her successor's health, and a rapid but tender ending:

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LORD BYRON.

Seal	Post Mark
Cupid driving a chariot	Newmarket
	Free
The	15 Dec 15
Lord Byron	1814
Albany	
London	

Wednesday [December 14, 1814]

My dearest B +

As usual I have but a short allowance of time to reply to your tendresses + but a few lines I know will be better than none—at least *I* find them so + It was very very good of you to think of me amidst all the + + visitors, &c. &c. I have scarcely recovered *mine* of yesterday—La Dame did talk so—oh my stars! but at least it saved me a world of trouble—oh! but she found out a likeness in your picture to Mignonne[2] who is of course very good humoured in consequence

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Lady Noel Byron, April 26th, 1851.

[2] Mignonne or Mignon was Byron and Augusta's pet name for Medora, then a few months old. About the end of 1816 or beginning of 1817, the name of Medora was altogether disused, and her other name of Elizabeth or Libby solely employed. Libby's godmothers were Lady Francis Osborne (Elizabeth) and Mrs. Wilmot (*née* Horton). Lord Byron was godfather. (Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, March 6th, 1817.)

+ I want to know dearest B + your plans—when you come + when you go—umph! when the writings travel—when y^e^ Cake is to be cut—when the Bells are to ring &c. &c. &c.—by the bye my visitors are acquainted with a & did praise her to the skies—They say her health has been hurt by *studying*, &c. &c. &c.

I have not a moment more my dearest + except to say

ever thine [1]

After his marriage, he generally spoke of Augusta as "a fool"—with equal contempt of her understanding and principles.[2] He was, however, continually lamenting her absence, saying no one loved him as she did—no one understood how to make him happy but her.[3]

When he found that Augusta had escaped from his dominion and resisted his wishes, his anger was excessively violent against both his wife and his sister, whom he considered to have joined hands against him. His bitterness was greatest against his wife, whom he then wanted to cast off, and his temper became savagely cruel, partly from the effects of Kinnaird's brandy, which brought him to the verge of madness, and at times more than to the verge. Out of revenge to both he took a *maîtresse en titre*, but this he seemed to think a greater injury to Augusta than to Lady Byron.

This is not the place for details of the time passed at Halnaby, Seaham, Six Mile Bottom, and 13, Piccadilly Terrace, or of Augusta's long visits there, and Byron's own short visit to Six Mile Bottom in the autumn.

[1] The signature indicated was used in the correspondence of Byron and Augusta by both of them in writing to each other. Lord Byron often so signed in letters to Lady Melbourne and Lady Byron.

[2] Compare certain passages in his later letters to Augusta, such as: "You see Goose—that there is no quiet in this world—so be a good woman—& repent of y^r^ sins.——" "I am truly sorry for Blake—but as you observe with great truth and novelty 'we are none of us immortal.'"—"I . . . shall probably place [Allegra] in a Convent—to become a good Catholic—& (it may be) a *Nun* being a character somewhat wanted in our family."

[3] Lady Byron's Statement Q.

LORD BYRON, AGED ABOUT TWENTY

From a Miniature belonging to his sister Augusta

About three weeks after Lady Byron's confinement, the aversion he had already at times displayed towards her struck everyone in the house as more formidable than ever. Augusta, George Byron, and Mrs. Clermont were then all staying in the house, and were very uneasy at his unaccountable manner and talk. He assumed a more threatening aspect towards Lady Byron. There were paroxysms of frenzy, but a still stronger impression was created by the frequent hints he gave of some suppressed and bitter determination. He often spoke of his conduct and intentions about women of the theatre —particularly on January 3rd, 1816, when he came to Lady Byron's room and talked on that subject with considerable violence. After that he did not go any more to see her or the child, but three days later sent her the following note :

January 6th, 1816.

When you are disposed to leave London, it would be convenient that a day should be fixed—and (if possible) not a very remote one for that purpose.—Of my opinion upon that subject you are sufficiently in possession, & of the circumstances which have led to it—as also to my plans—or rather—intentions—for the future———When in the country I will write to you more fully—as Lady Noel has asked you to Kirkby—there you can be for the present—unless you prefer Seaham—

As the dismissal of the present establishment is of importance to me—the sooner you can fix on the day the better—though of course your convenience & inclination shall be first consulted———

The Child will of course accompany you—there is a more easy & safer carriage than the chariot (unless you prefer it) which I mentioned before—on that you can do as you please——

The next day [Sunday, January 7th, 1816] Lady Byron replied in writing as follows : " I shall obey your wishes and fix the earliest day that circumstances will

admit for leaving London." Consequently she quitted London on January 15th.

A day or two after her arrival at Kirkby her mother, Lady Noel, drew from her many of the circumstances of her misery, and Lady Byron's own conviction that her life would be endangered by returning to his roof. She also communicated the impression of a *certain degree* of insanity which had been made on all those who had the nearest opportunities of observation; but Lady Byron also told her mother that the malady, if such there was, did not appear to become more decided, and that she believed him to be perfectly competent to transact matters of actual business, and, indeed, particularly acute about them. Lady Noel took up the cause of her daughter with the thoroughness of a tigress whose young are threatened, and, with Lady Byron's somewhat half-hearted consent at first, her mother immediately went to London to prepare for measures to protect Lady Byron from intolerable misery. During her stay in London for about a week Lady Noel saw Mrs. Leigh and George Byron, who agreed with her that every endeavour should be made to induce Lord Byron to agree to a separation. Lady Noel also consulted Sir Samuel Romilly, Serjeant Heywood, Dr. Lushington the civilian, and Colonel Francis Hastings Doyle, an old friend of the Milbanke family and a shrewd man of the world. They all agreed that a separation was indispensable, but Colonel Doyle strongly urged that no pressure should be put on Lady Byron to induce her to go further than she would spontaneously do. He said he would much rather run the risk of a negotiation which might leave some possible chance of a future reconciliation under altered circumstances than deprive her of the status of a free agent. Dr. Lushington, on the other hand, said Lady Byron must allow her advisers entirely to dictate the measures to be taken, and that otherwise she would have no security. Nothing had been said at this time by Lady Byron of her suspicions about Augusta, except apparently a few incoherent words to Lady Noel, when telling her

that Lord Byron had threatened to take the child away from her and commit it to Augusta's charge.

When in his sober senses he had no wish to take the child away from its mother, but when in a state of excitement he seemed to glory in bringing on himself the odium of the world. Moderation in anything was intolerable to his nature. In January, 1816, his mood appeared to be, "I cannot be positively good, but what prevents me being positively bad? Nothing—well—I'll show the world I'm fit for great things."

On Tuesday evening, January 23rd, Captain George Byron, in conversation with Lord Byron, openly arraigned his conduct towards his wife, and threatened him with her parents' taking up her defence. Lord Byron interrupted George Byron with the most animated expression of exultation, and said, "Let them come forward, I'll glory in it."

He was very changeable. Sometimes he spoke of her with the greatest kindness—though never seeming to feel any desire that she should return—and the next hour saying, as he did to George Byron, that the sooner Lady Byron's friends took measures for a separation the better. Besides "the usual nonsense about women at the theatre," he talked about marrying Miss Mercer Elphinstone if he could get rid of his present connection.

During the uncertainty about the manner in which he would meet the attempt to negotiate for an amicable separation, Miss Selina Doyle, sister of Colonel Doyle, wrote to Lady Byron, January 26th, 1816:

"As a real wife you were contemned, but when you become again the *beau idéal* of his imagination, between the possession of which and him there is an insuperable barrier, you will be a second Thersa [Thyrza], perhaps supplant her totally. These are prophecies and may appear irrelevant, but as I think them now, I like to say them, they may possibly save you a pang hereafter when you hear of his love and misery at being deprived of you, which nothing can replace. No, nothing indeed, for were you to return the excitement pro-

duced by desire of you would cease, I am convinced, and his incapacity of rendering you happy, as you deserve in his opinion, would make him hate himself and you, and *hélas*, as long as he lives I fear that his mind will be in that disordered state without malady increases to a degree of imbecility, for I doubt not that that degree of insanity is his natural state, at least since the period his mind was first supposed to have been affected, and I have as little doubt that had he married Thersa, he would have been to Thersa what he has been to you. She could not better have 'ministered to a mind diseased' than you did when living with him, than you do in leaving him."[1]

For the last two days of January Lord Byron talked in a very quiet way of proposing a separation himself, saying he could not live with his wife, and must be at liberty. The child he would leave with her, in order to show that he had no fault to find with her, but he should consider about it all. He constantly declared his dislike of being a married man.

Should the negotiation for an amicable separation fail, the step intended to be taken was to institute a suit in the Ecclesiastical Court to obtain a divorce of bed and board on the pleas of cruelty and adultery.[2]

On February 2nd Sir Ralph Noel wrote in harsh and decided terms, drawn up by his council of advisers, to require a separation. Thus addressed, Lord Byron shrank from that liberty for which he had so ardently longed, and positively refused to accept the separation. The whole affair then rapidly became of world-wide celebrity. The uproar against him at that time was really due to latent enmities, awaiting some chance

[1] He had occasionally spoken of Thyrza to Lady Byron, at Seaham and afterwards in London, always with strong but contained emotion. He once showed his wife a beautiful tress of Thyrza's hair, but never mentioned her real name.

[2] As Lord Byron never presented himself to the Philistines as a pattern of matrimonial virtue, Moore, Murray and Co. must have evolved out of their own imagination the curious invention that during the time Lord and Lady Byron lived together there was not a single instance of infidelity! No such statement as that ever was or could have been made by himself, even for the gratification of Hannah More.

circumstance, such as the separation, to burst out. He had accumulated an overwhelming mass of resentment against himself by negation of time-honoured beliefs, opposition to established order, disregard of persons, rejection of law and restraint for himself. More than enough irreconcilable ill-wishers, powerful or obscure, were on the watch for his overthrow. Every kind of report was spread about him, and more especially the old report about Augusta was revived, and gained ground on the numerous other conjectures as to probable or possible causes for the separation. The report did not arise, and could not possibly have arisen, in any way from Lady Byron or her connections. To *them* it occasioned *entire surprise*—she only was too well prepared for it [1]—and so was Augusta herself, who afterwards wrote [2] (July 15th, 1816):

"I never thought the report came from you or yours—I know too well how to account for it—"

Lady Byron's friends could never forget the kindness she experienced from Mrs. Leigh the latter part of the time she was in Piccadilly. Even for Lady Byron's life they believed they might thank Mrs. Leigh, and however weakly the latter might have acted, they firmly believed her intentions to have been good during all that latter period.[3] Mrs. Leigh always made the most of her good offices. On a later occasion she quoted a remarkable little speech of Sir John Hobhouse. His words were:

"Lady Byron has every reason to be grateful to you, for you not only risked the loss of property, but what was much dearer to you, his affection."[4]

When a suit in the Spiritual Court, presided over by Sir William Scott, appeared inevitable, Lady Byron came to her father in London, and arrived at Mivart's Hotel on Thursday, February 22nd, 1816. The same evening she had a long private conversation with Dr.

[1] Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, July 11th, 1816.
[2] To Lady Byron.
[3] Mary Ann Clermont to the Hon. Lady Noel, March 9th, 1816.
[4] Lady Noel Byron's and the Rev. F. W. Robertson's Memorandum of April 8th, 1851.

Lushington, and confided to him the whole of the circumstances, including those that could not be made public.

By the last week in February the reports prejudicial to Mrs. Leigh's character were very formidable. On her friends "vehemently and indignantly resenting *such* a calumny," they were met with the argument that Lady Byron's "refusal to assign a reason for her separation confirmed the report," and that no one but she could deny it with any effect. "Nothing to be sure could be more absurd than such an inference." It was not she who had started or circulated the report, and she could not seriously be expected to divulge her motives or the means by which she was prepared to secure herself and her child in the event of failure of a difficult negotiation, while her hope was to avoid all exposure and litigation. The reports were not kept up by Lady Byron's silence so much as by the indefinite prolongation of Mrs. Leigh's stay in Piccadilly under such eccentric conditions. Under that roof she was in a focus of incessant observation and ever increasing curiosity. The surest course for those friends who had her worldly reputation at heart would have been to insist on her leaving Lord Byron's house and London without further delay or subterfuge. But Mrs. Leigh could not then be induced to dare Lord Byron's displeasure and go away, so application was made to Lady Byron on February 26th for some kind of certificate of character for Mrs. Leigh. This Lady Byron could not and did not give. In her answer to Mrs. Leigh's friend (Mrs. Leigh being supposed to be ignorant of this correspondence), Lady Byron disclaimed participation in any reports, referred to her former grateful and affectionate acknowledgments of Mrs. Leigh's good offices towards her personally, whilst regretting that the extreme perplexities of present circumstances forbade any specific confidences.[1]

Unsuccessful attempts were made through the mediation of Lord Holland, and afterwards of Lord Byron's

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, February 26th, 1816, and Lady Byron's answer of the same day.

first cousin, Robert John Wilmot, to induce Lord Byron to accept a separation by agreement. Wilmot arrived in London on March 2nd. In the course of his mediation, which was undertaken about March 6th, he expressed great anxiety that Lady Byron should do that justice to Mrs. Leigh in the eyes of an ill-natured world which no one else could render, by making known sentiments of confidence, esteem, and affection, which he supposed to be still intact. He was very urgent that Lady Byron should see her, and the situation became distressing, as she could not indefinitely refuse to meet her as before without giving a sufficient reason, and Mrs. Leigh's numerous connections might be expected to impute malice to Lady Byron.

Dr. Lushington thought it would be extremely improper to renew any intercourse with Mrs. Leigh until means had been taken to obviate any injurious effect on Lady Byron's position. The only possible course was to communicate everything to Wilmot, and after this had taken place Dr. Lushington somewhat reluctantly withdrew opposition to a renewal of personal intercourse. His feeling was that any personal contact with Mrs. Leigh was a degradation to Lady Byron, and in after years the cessation of such intercourse was regarded by him with unmixed satisfaction.[1] Together with Wilmot and Colonel (afterwards Sir) Francis Hastings Doyle, he then prepared a clear and conclusive statement of the existing circumstances, intended for production under the contingency of the fullest explanation of the motives and grounds of Lady Byron's conduct becoming necessary. It was hoped and believed that nothing might ever occur to bring into discussion the motives and principles of Lady Byron's conduct towards Mrs. Leigh. But the character with which Lady Byron was implicated demanded the greatest caution, and Colonel Doyle, in particular, recommended her to act towards Mrs. Leigh as if a time might possibly arise when it would be necessary to justify herself. He could not dismiss from

[1] Stephen Lushington, D.C.L., M.P., to Lady Byron, December 14th, 1829.

his mind the very serious embarrassment he and her advisers were under from the effects of a too confiding disposition, and he impressed upon her and everyone else the importance of securing herself from eventual danger. Above all, he desired her to keep copies of all her letters, and destroy none of those she might receive from Mrs. Leigh, as she had once imprudently done.[1]

STATEMENT. A L.

In case of my death to be
given to Colonel Doyle—
A. I. Byron [2]

[Thursday March 14 1816] [3]

During the year that Lady Byron lived under the same roof with Lord B: certain circumstances occurred & some intimations were made which excited a suspicion in Lady B's mind that an improper connection had at one time & might even still subsist between Lord B: and Mrs L:—— The causes however of this suspicion did not amount to proof & Lady Byron did not consider herself justified in acting upon these suspicions by immediately quitting Lord B's house for the following reasons.—1st & principally because the causes of suspicion, tho' they made a strong impression upon her mind, did not amount to positive proof, & Lady B: considered, that whilst a possibility of innocence existed, every principle of duty & humanity forbad her to act, as if Mrs L: was actually guilty, more especially as any intimation of so heinous crime even if not distinctly proved, must have seriously affected Mrs L's character & happiness——

2d. Lady B: had it not in her power to pursue a middle course; it was utterly impossible for her to remove Mrs L from the society & roof of Lord B: except by a direct accusation.

[1] Colonel Doyle to Lady Byron, July 9th and July 18th, 1816.
[2] The packet was sealed.
[3] The writing that follows is in Dr. Lushington's hand.

3dly. Because Mrs L: had from her first acquaintance with Lady B: always manifested towards her the utmost kindness & attention endeavouring as far as laid in her power to mitigate the violence and cruelty of Lord B:

4th. Because Mrs L: at times exhibited signs of a deep remorse; at least so Lady B: interpreted them to be, tho' She does not mean to aver that the feelings Mrs L: then shewed were signs of remorse for the commission of the crime alluded to or any other of so dark a description.——

& lastly—Because Lady B: conceived it possible that the crime, if committed might not only be deeply repented of, but never have been perpetrated since her marriage with Lord B:

It was from these motives & strongly inclining to a charitable interpretation of all that passed that Lady B: never during her living with Lord B: intimated a suspicion of this nature.——

Since Lady B's Separation from Lord B: the Report has become current in the World of such a connection having subsisted This report was not spread nor sanctioned by Lady B:—Mrs L's character has however been to some extent affected thereby—Lady B: cannot divest her mind of the impressions before stated, but anxious to avoid all possibility of doing injury to Mrs L: & not by any conduct of her own to throw any suspicion upon Mrs L: & it being intimated that Mrs L:'s character can never be so effectually preserved as by a renewal of intercourse with Lady B: she does for the motives & reasons before mentioned consent to renew that intercourse—

Now this Statement is made in order to Justify Lady B: in the line of conduct she has now determined to adopt & in order to prevent all misconstruction of her motives in case Mrs L: should be proved hereafter to be guilty, and if any circumstances should compel or render it necessary for Lady B: to prefer the charge in order

that Lady B: may be at full liberty so to do without being prejudiced by her present conduct.

It is to be observed that this Paper does not contain nor pretend to contain any of the grounds which gave rise to the suspicion which has existed & still continues to exist in Lady B's mind—

We whose names are hereunto subscribed are of opinion, that under all the circumstances above stated & also from our knowledge of what has passed respecting the conduct of all parties mentioned, that the line now adopted by Lady B: is strictly right and honourable, as well as just towards Mrs L: & Lady B: ought not whatever may hereafter occur be prejudiced thereby—.

London—	Robt. John Wilmot	[Signed:
March 14.	F. H. Doyle	: by :
1816	Stephen Lushington	: each.]

[Written Addition by Lady Byron.]

The reasons above stated are the genuine reasons which actuated my conduct—

Anne Isabella Byron

[Attestations to Lady Byron's signature by

London	R. J. W.	Mr Wilmot
March 14. 1816	F. H. D.	Col: Doyle and
	S. L:	Dr Lushington.]

Upon one contingency only, viz., the taking from Lady Byron of her child, and placing her under the care of Mrs. Leigh, would the disclosure have been made of Lady Byron's grounds for suspecting Mrs. Leigh's guilt.[1]

Meanwhile she "did *everything* for Augusta but *give precisely such an authority*" for specific denials as could possibly constitute a departure from veracity.[2]

It was not till Saturday, March 16th, that Mrs. Leigh

[1] Sir Francis Hastings Doyle to Lady Noel Byron, February 9th, 1830.
[2] Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, April 27th, 1816.

moved from 13, Piccadilly Terrace, and then only to her own rooms at St. James's Palace.

At the instance of his friend Hobhouse, Lord Byron ultimately agreed to the principle of a separation on equitable terms; but this measure was carried through in the teeth of opposition and obstruction from his adviser, John Hanson, an attorney of bad repute, but a very cool, calculating fellow, who had contrived to marry his daughter to the mad Lord Portsmouth—a marriage which was set aside afterwards on the ground of his lordship's weakness of intellect and imbecility, and consequent incapacity to contract marriage.[1]

The signature of the separation was delayed on various pretexts till April 21st.

At a party given by Lady Jersey in the second week

[1] Dr. Lushington's statement to Mr. H. A. Bathurst, January 27th, 1870, in which I also find that "Lord Byron on the occasion of the marriage was present, gave the bride away, and whilst leading her to the altar reminded her of his seduction of her—Lord Byron told this to Lady Byron." John Charles, 3rd Earl of Portsmouth, born 1767; married, first, an old Miss Norton, many years his senior, and probably warranted not to present an heir to the family. The family seem to have regarded her as a safe caretaker for a man of great eccentricity; but she died November 15th, 1813, and on March 10th, 1814, the lunatic married young Miss Hanson, who was not perhaps considered to be past child-bearing.

The brother, Newton Fellowes, then took charge of the person of the lunatic, and shut him up at Hurstbourne; Lady Portsmouth and all the Hansons being rigorously kept at a distance. A suit of nullity was brought against the marriage; but this lasted many years, partly owing to the opposition of Lord Eldon—who had been publicly ridiculed by Newton Fellowes—for they were personal and political enemies. Newton Fellowes was a racing man, and christened his horses by nicknames of Lord Eldon—"Old Bags," "Upright Judge," etc. Through Lord Eldon's influence the Hansons obtained for Lady Portsmouth an order for an interview with Lord Portsmouth. Armed with this decree Lady Portsmouth and her family went down with a hired force from London to Hurstbourne, intending to use the interview to capture and carry off the lunatic. But Newton Fellowes suspected this, and was on the spot quite ready for them, with a still larger and better armed force. When Lady Portsmouth and the Hansons arrived at Hurstbourne, they were not admitted inside the house, but received in the entrance portico, whither the lunatic was brought out, surrounded by his body-guard, commanded by Newton Fellowes in person, who went up to old Hanson and seized him by the throat, pointed a loaded pistol at him, and said: "If there is any attempt at abduction, I shall shoot you first." Under these circumstances Lady Portsmouth's interview with Lord Portsmouth did not last long, and led to nothing. The Hanson expedition had failed and returned to town. All this was related to the late Earl of Lovelace by his solicitor, Henry Karslake, who also, I think, acted for Lord Lovelace's aunt, Lady Catherine Fellowes and her husband Newton Fellowes (whose second wife was Lady Catherine Fortescue).

of April Mrs. Leigh was cut by some people (Mrs. George Lamb was one), and Lord Byron, who also went, was shunned by a still greater number. It was stated by Moore that Miss Mercer Elphinstone, afterwards Madame de Flahaut and Baroness Keith, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Byron's genius, was particularly gracious to him that evening, and there is also some legend that, on finding him there, she exclaimed: "Oh! Lord Byron, if you had married me all this would never have happened." [1]

It was a little before that party, which proved such an unpleasant ordeal for Mrs. Leigh, that the Hon. Mrs. George Lamb wrote about her to Lady Byron:

"As to the other person, I do not wish to reveal her faults, for I could almost pity her, when I think how unhappy she must be, and I look upon her more as his victim than as his accomplice." [2]

[1] "Lord Byron used to tell a story of a little red-haired girl, who, when countesses and ladies of fashion were leaving the room where he was in crowds (to *cut* him after his quarrel with his wife) stopped short near a table against which he was leaning, gave him a familiar nod, and said, 'You should have married *me*, and then this would not have happened to you.'" Hazlitt's "Conversations of James Northcote," No. 15. Miss Mercer Elphinstone was reported to have been desperately in love with the Duke of Devonshire. In 1817 she was married to Auguste Charles Joseph, Comte de Flahaut de la Billarderie, then an exile in England. He was born April 21st, 1785. His mother (afterwards Marquise de Souza) had been married very young to the elder Flahaut, but they separated immediately. Before the Revolution, in which he perished, she was excessively intimate with Talleyrand.

Her son became general of brigade and aide-de-camp to Napoleon, rallied to Louis XVIII., whom he deserted again in the hundred days, and became one of the most desperate opponents of the second restoration. Talleyrand's intervention saved him from figuring in the ordinance of July 24th, 1815, and prosecution, but he was expelled from France, and only returned to live at Paris in 1827. By his marriage there were only daughters, but the Duc de Morny was notoriously his son. (The chapter of maternity tacitly lay under an imperial interdict.)

[2] In the Morrison Catalogue of Manuscripts is printed a letter from Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. George Lamb, evidently the answer to Mrs. Lamb's letter quoted above. The following is an extract from Lady Byron's note as printed by the catalogue compiler:

"Monday, April 1st, 1816.

"I am glad that you think of *her* with the feelings of pity which prevail in my mind, and surely if in *mine* there must be some cause for them. I never was, nor ever can be so *mercilessly* virtuous, as to admit *no* excuse for even the worst of errors."

Strange that Mr. Alfred Morrison and his friends, however ignorant, could have failed to see that such words could only apply to Mrs. Leigh!

Lady Holland was at that time amongst Lord Byron's enemies, but not on the ground of his relations with Lady Byron, which she regarded as mere peccadilloes compared with his behaviour in other matters, of which the most important seems to have been going to the Continent without paying the Duchess of Devonshire her rent.

A letter was written at this time by Lord Byron to Lady Byron, which is necessary for the comprehension of the very last letters that ever passed between them, nearly five years later. It has never before been accurately published, having been previously printed from a version inaccurate in every line.

To
The Lady Byron
Mivart's Hotel

[Easter] Sunday April [14] 1816

"More last words"—not many—and such as you will attend to—answer I do not expect—nor does it import—but you will hear me.— — I have just parted from Augusta—almost the last being you had left me to part with — & the only unshattered tie of my existence — wherever I may go—& I am going far — you & I can never meet again in this world—nor in the next — Let this content or atone.—— If any accident occurs to me—be kind to *her*, — — if she is then nothing—to her children ; — —

Some time ago—I informed you that with the knowledge that any child of ours was already provided for by other & better means—I had made my will in favor of her & her children — as prior to my marriage :—this was not done in (anger prejudice)[1] to you for we had not then differed—& even this is useless during your life by the settlements—I say therefore—be kind to her & hers—for never has she acted or spoken otherwise towards you— she has ever been your friend—this may seem valueless to one who has now so many :— — be kind to

[1] ["Anger" is effaced.—Ed.]

her—however—& recollect that though it may be advantage to you to have lost your husband—it is sorrow to her to have the waters now—or the earth hereafter —between her & her brother.—

She is gone—I need hardly add that of this request she knows nothing—your late compliances have not been so extensive—as to render this an encroachment :— I repeat it—(for deep resentments have but *half* recollections) that you once did promise me thus much—do not forget it—nor deem it cancelled it was not a vow. — — —

M^r^ Wharton has sent me a letter with one question & two pieces of intelligence—to the question I answer that the carriage is yours—& as it has only carried us to Halnaby—& London—& you to Kirkby—I hope it will take you many a more propitious journey.—

The receipts can remain—unless troublesome, if so— they can be sent to Augusta—& through her I would also hear of my little daughter—my address will be left for M^rs^ Leigh.—The ring is of no lapidary value—but it contains the hair of a king and an ancestor—which I should wish to preserve to Miss Byron.—

To a subsequent letter of M^r^ Wharton's I have to reply that it is the "law's delay" not mine,—& that when he & M^r^ H have adjusted the tenor of the bond— I am ready to sign

Y^rs^ Ever
very truly
Byron

He was refused permission by the French Government to travel through France except on condition of keeping a prescribed route and avoiding Paris.[1] According to Lady Holland, the ladies of Paris would have received him with open arms had he been allowed to go there.[2]

On April 23rd Lord Byron left the house where he had been almost uninterruptedly from March 28th, 1815,

[1] His friend Hobhouse was also unable two months later to procure French passports in consequence of his book about the Hundred Days.
[2] Dr. Lushington to Lady Byron, April 30th, 1816.

and stayed two nights at Dover, where the curiosity to see him was so great that many ladies accoutred themselves as chambermaids for the purpose of obtaining under that disguise a nearer inspection whilst he continued at the inn, and on going to embark he walked through a lane of spectators.[1] On April 25th, 1816, he crossed to Ostend with the presentiment that his absence would be long.

[1] Dr. Lushington to Lady Byron, May 6th, 1816.

CHAPTER III

MANFRED

"Pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum, ut signaculum super brachium tuum: quia fortis est ut mors dilectio, dura sicut infernus aemulatio: lampades eius lampades ignis atque flammarum.

"Aquae multae non potuerunt extinguere caritatem, nec flumina obruent illam: si dederit homo omnem substantiam domus suae, pro dilectione, quasi nihil despiciet eam."

> "Alas, I know not by what name to call thee!
> Sister and wife are the two dearest names;
> And I wou'd call thee both! and both are sin.
> * * * * *
> And I shou'd break thro' Laws divine and humane,
> And think them Cobwebs, spread for little Man,
> Which all the bulky Herd of Nature breaks.
> The vigorous young World was ignorant
> Of these Restrictions, 'tis decrepit now;
> Not more devout, but more decay'd, and cold.
> All this is impious; therefore we must part:"
>
> *Don Sebastian.*[1]

THE same day that Lord Byron crossed the water, "Lady Byron too went into the country to break her heart." So said Rogers, and he was not so far wrong as Lushington, who reported the words, wished to believe.

[1] At Halnaby, two or three days after the marriage, Lady Byron—who had been reading Dryden's tragedy—thoughtlessly alluded to the subject: an incestuous union of brother and sister through ignorance of their parentage. He probably supposed the allusion designed, and made a strange and violent scene which first gave her an indefinite but most painful suspicion. Her first idea was that he might have had a connection with some girl, whom he afterwards discovered to be a natural sister. This was rendered more probable by his father's libertine character.

After this scene she carefully avoided this subject, though he made it difficult by continual allusions to it as if for the purpose of ascertaining whether she had any suspicion or not. She was in constant fear of being supposed to be trying to find out his secrets, but knew not what subjects to avoid.

If happiness could be restored by exhortations to fortitude, she would have been well provided. She was admonished not to waste her health and spirits in unavailing lamentations over the past, or in regret for one who had sacrificed her happiness and forfeited his own by an entire dereliction of principle both in theory and practice. Her new state was declared eligible by comparison with the misery and degradation from which she had escaped.

Her real state of mind was described by herself many years later :

" I felt appalled at the desert which seemed spread before me. At first indeed I felt relief from breathing an atmosphere of innocence—but it was not for long. There was a burning world within which made the external one cold—I had given up all that was congenial with youth— The imagination of what *might have been* was all that remained— — — In this state I had a singular degree of insensibility to *the real*— The touch of every hand seemed cold. I could look on tears without sympathy—and I returned kindness heartlessly & mechanically.—One principle was still active, tho' unaccompanied by natural feelings—it was—to follow his example who ' went about doing good '— But the little good I might have done was perhaps frustrated by the state of my own mind—The poor [were] rather indeed benefactors to *me* than I to them—they had a claim upon my thoughts which I could not set aside for visionary indulgences—they saved me from myself— Thus passed several months—"

It is not surprising that at this time Lady Milbanke (who had then resumed under Lord Wentworth's Will her maiden name of Noel) was in much trouble of mind about her daughter. Lady Noel had written (Sunday, March 3rd, 1816) to Lady Byron :

" I neither do, or can expect that you should not *feel* and *deeply feel*—but I have sometimes thought (and that not *only lately*) that Your mind is too *high wrought*—too much so for *this* World—only the *grander* objects

engage your thoughts, Your Character is like *Proof Spirits*—not fit for common use—I could almost wish the *Tone* of it *lowered* nearer to the level of *us every day people*, and that You would *endeavor* to take *some interest* in *every day concerns*—believe me, *by degrees*, You will find the benefit of it— I have not slept on a Bed of Roses thro' my life—I have had afflictions and *serious ones*, tho' none *so Severe* as the *present*— Yet in my sixty-fifth Year, I have endeavored to *rally*, and *shall rally*, if *You do* so—

"Now my Love here is a Sundays Sermon for You—and here it shall end—"

Lady Byron's health was changed for the worse; once she had never known such a thing as a sleepless night, but now her rest was much disturbed. She who had been a light-hearted young girl, living amongst all the prominent people of her time—both in the worlds of intelligence and fashion—fell among Methodists, Quaker philanthropists, Unitarians, educationalists, reformers, co-operators and other destructives of the pleasures of this world—a comprehensible reaction from Byronism, which was destruction of an unphilanthropic kind. The flesh is weak, and in a half-jesting way she sometimes had impulses of revolt from the dismal company of good works. She once wrote to her daughter (August 20th, 1836, while staying with her charming cousin, the Hon. Mrs. George Lamb):

"My dearest Ada—Here I am under the roof of her who is more my cousin than any cousin by blood except one.[1] She gratifies my *taste*, and though I have not allowed it to be the director of my friendships I must own I am happier in the society of those who do not offend it. The objects in which I am engaged often make it necessary for me to sacrifice such considerations for not only are philanthropists in general ugly but often less refined than could be desired. Your memory will furnish the examples."

[1] Viscountess Tamworth was that other cousin by blood whom Lady Byron had loved from babyhood.

After the conclusion of the separation business, the extreme miseries and perplexities of Lady Byron's position had lessened, but not vanished. One of her greatest difficulties was the attitude to be maintained towards Augusta, whom she had met under very trying circumstances three or four times in March, 1816. After one of those distressing interviews, Augusta had written to one of Lord Byron's friends:

"I never can describe Lady Byron's appearance to you—but by comparing it to what I should imagine that of a Being of another world. She is positively reduced to a Skeleton—pale as *ashes*—a deep hollow tone of voice & a *calm* in her manner quite supernatural—She received *me* kindly, but that really appeared the only SURVIVING feeling—all else was *death like* calm—I can never forget it—never!"

On all these occasions, one subject—uppermost in the thoughts of both—had been virtually ignored, except that Augusta had had the audacity to name the reports about herself "with the pride of innocence!—as it is called."[1] Intercourse could not continue on that footing, for Augusta probably aimed at a positive guarantee of her innocence and at committing Lady Byron irretrievably to that.

At last Lady Byron could no longer bear the false position, and before leaving London she went to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers,[2] a most intimate friend of Augusta's, who

[1] Lady Byron's Statement G.

[2] Theresa Parker, born September 22nd, 1775, daughter of John, 1st Lord Boringdon, by his wife Theresa, daughter of the 1st Lord Grantham, ambassador at Vienna in the time of Maria Theresa, whose name was given to his child. Lady Grantham was a great-granddaughter of Oliver Cromwell. The Hon. Theresa Parker was married, April 17th, 1798, to the Hon. George Villiers, third son of the 1st Earl of Clarendon, who was born November 23rd, 1759, and died March 21st, 1827. The Hon. Mrs. George Villiers died January 12th, 1856. Sir Henry Taylor, "Autobiography," i. 115, well characterizes her as "a woman of a strong and ardent nature, but also a woman of the world." Among her children were George, Earl of Clarendon, K.G., Viceroy of Ireland, diplomatist and Foreign Secretary; the Right Hon. Charles Pelham Villiers, and Lady Theresa Lewis. Theresa, Mrs. Earle, author of "Pot-Pourri from a Surrey Garden," is her granddaughter, and, I believe, godchild. I only once saw Mrs. Villiers, less than two years before her death, when she was about eighty years old, but I have a vivid recollection of her animated and delightful

had pressed Lady Byron hard more than once to vouch for Augusta's character, and whose indignation had been excited by the absence of such a certificate. All this changed when she had received full explanation of the indelible impression left on Lady Byron's mind. Mrs. Villiers was also informed by Wilmot, and jointly with him strongly urged Lady Byron to avow to Augusta the information of which they were in possession. Colonel Doyle and Dr. Lushington saw no necessity for this step, and would have preferred that all intercourse should then be dropped. But Lady Byron would have experienced pain in throwing off without explanation a person she had loved and from whom she conceived she had received kindness.[1] So Lady Byron wrote on her own responsibility, in conformity with the urgent advice of Wilmot and Mrs. Villiers, and announced what she knew. Augusta did not attempt to deny it, and in fact admitted everything in her letters of June, July, and August, 1816.[2] It is unnecessary to produce them here, as their contents are confirmed and made sufficiently clear by the correspondence of 1819 in another chapter.[3] Colonel Doyle wrote to Lady Byron (July 9th, 1816):

"Your feelings I perfectly understand, I will even *whisper* to you I approve. . . . But you must remember that your position is very extraordinary, and though when we have sufficiently deliberated and *decided*, we should pursue our course without embarrassing ourselves with the consequences, yet we should not neglect the means of fully justifying ourselves if the necessity be ever imposed upon us. I see the possibility of a con-

conversation and manner, with something young about the still well-cut face, the light in her eyes and agreeable voice. She spelt her name Therese in all the signatures I have seen.

[1] Colonel Doyle to Lady Byron, July 9th, 1816.

[2] [See Chapters IX. and X.; also Introduction, p. ix.—Ed.]

[3] Sir Leslie Stephen said it made him quite uncomfortable to read Mrs. Leigh's letters of humiliation dated 1816. That she could have written as she did, considering all the circumstances of the whole miserable story seemed "to imply the sort of moral idiocy of which Lady Byron speaks. To print the letters would seem to be superfluous and any superfluous printing would, on my view, be a mistake." (Letter to the Earl of Lovelace, April 1st, 1900.)

tingency under which the fullest explanation of the motives and grounds of your conduct may be necessary, I therefore implore of you to suffer no delicacy to interfere with your endeavouring to obtain the fullest *admission* of the fact. . . . If you obtain an acknowledgment of the facts and that your motives be, as you seem to think, properly appreciated, I think on the whole we shall have reason to rejoice that you have acted as you have done, but I shall be very anxious to have a more detailed knowledge of what has passed and particularly of the state in which you leave it.

" The step you have taken was attended with great risk, and I could not, contemplating the danger to which it might have exposed you, have originally advised it. If however your correspondence has produced an acknowledgment of the fact even previous to your marriage I shall be most happy that it has taken place."

Colonel Doyle also wrote to Lady Byron (July 18th, 1816) :

" I must recommend you to act as if a time might *possibly* arise when it would be necessary for you to justify yourself, though nothing short of an absolute necessity so imperative as to be irresistible could ever authorise your advertence to your present communications. Still I cannot dismiss from my mind the experience we have had nor so far forget the very serious embarrassment we were under from the effects of your too confiding disposition, as not to implore you to bear in mind the importance of securing yourself from eventual danger. This is my first object—and if that be attained—I shall approve and applaud all the kindness you can show."

At this time the reports against Mrs. Leigh were very strong. It is not impossible that they were in Scott's mind when he wrote " The Antiquary," published about this time, the plot of which is based on a marriage between persons supposed to be " ower sib." Byronic personages appeared sometimes in " Tales of my Landlord " after this time. George Staunton (or Robertson), in " The Heart of Mid Lothian," is very much the

popular presentation of Byron. The discovery, after his death by the hands of a son whom he was seeking and meant to acknowledge, that he had been secretly a Catholic and practised severe penance for the crimes of his youth, has a curious resemblance to Scott's own prophecy that Byron would end as a Catholic.

Lord and Lady Darlington,[1] while at Geneva in the summer of 1816, were told very seriously that Mrs. Leigh, disguised as a page, was there with Lord Byron, and their informer could not be persuaded that it was not so.[2] Lady Granville had dropped Mrs. Leigh's acquaintance, but called on her again in consequence of a letter from Lady Byron, appealing for a continuance of former kindness, and expressing confidence that Mrs. Leigh would in future deserve it.

For a long time Mrs. Leigh was in unceasing dread of social collapse, and thought she might have to disappear, in which case she said she wished neither Lady Byron nor Mrs. Villiers to make any further efforts to see her or take her part.

Desperation about her character in the world very nearly drove Augusta to follow Byron abroad. Her distraction and misery were most striking when she came to London on July 11th, 1816; but her letters also from Six Mile Bottom in May and June had been "dejected and melancholy to the greatest degree." To Mrs. Villiers she wrote "in a tone of despair, saying that *now* her own happiness was at an end, and she could only look to that of her friends." "Her letters to Lord Frederick Bentinck (who is as you know very much in her confidence) are he tells me more melancholy than ever, but I do not hear a word of any particular cause,"[3] reports Mrs. Villiers.

[1] William Henry, third Earl of Darlington, born July 27th, 1766, married firstly, September 19th, 1787, Lady Katharine Powlett, who died June 16th, 1807; he married secondly, July 27th, 1813, Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Russell, who died January 31st, 1861. He was created Duke of Cleveland, January 15th, 1833, and died January 2nd, 1842. See also note at page 26.

[2] The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron, September 17th, 1816.

[3] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, June 8th, 1816; Robert John Wilmot to Lady Byron, June 12th, 1816.

To another correspondent Mrs. Leigh wrote, June 10th, 1816: "None can know *how much* I have suffered from this unhappy business—and, indeed, I have never known a moment's peace, and begin to despair for the future." [1]

On Wednesday, July 17th, 1816, she dined with the Villiers's, stayed with them between four and five hours; "and I must say," wrote Mrs. Villiers, "that in my life I never saw anything equal to her dejection, her absence, her whole mind evidently pre-occupied and engrossed, and apparently insensible of being in society. Mr. Villiers, who really exerted himself, and commanded himself much better than I expected, to show her as much kindness as before, tells me that while I was called out of the room to speak to a person, he could not extract an answer, even a monosyllable from her, except when he joked about the predicted destruction of the world to-day, and said (*à propos* to some arrangements which the boys wanted to make) 'we need not give ourselves any trouble about it, for the world will be at an end to-morrow, and that will put an end to all our cares.' She quite exclaimed before the boys, the servants, etc., 'I don't know what *you* may all be, but I am sure *I'm* not prepared for the next world, so I hope this will last.'" This seemed the only topic that roused her.[2]

A real reformation, according to Christian ideals, would not merely have driven Byron and Augusta apart from each other, but expelled them from the world of wickedness, consigned them for the rest of their lives to strict expiation and holiness. But this could never be; and, in the long run, her flight to an outcast life would have been a lesser evil than the consequences of preventing it. The fall of Mrs. Leigh would have been a

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to the Rev. Francis Hodgson. The latter half of the passage quoted was omitted from the printed version produced in a memoir of the reverend gentleman, but was brought to light at the auction of the original letter in 1885. The suppressed words, apart from their own significance, are an average sample of every-day Byronese garbling.

[2] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, July 18th, 1816. [See Chapter X. —Ed.]

definite catastrophe, affecting a small number of people for a time in a startling manner. The disaster would have been obvious, but partial, immediately over and ended. While at first causing acute pain to a very few, it must soon have relieved them from increasing difficulties and dangers which gradually undermined and ruined many lives and fortunes. She would have lived in open revolt against the Christian standard, not in secret disobedience and unrepentant hypocrisy. He would have avoided the acted profligacy in which he pursued a savage revenge for her desertion of him. Judged by the light of nature, a heroism and sincerity of united fates and doom would have seemed beyond all comparison purer and nobler than what they actually drifted into. By the social code, sin between man and woman can never be blotted out, as assuredly it is the most irreversible of facts. Nevertheless societies secretly respect, though they excommunicate, those rebel lovers who sacrifice everything else, but observe a law of their own, and make a religion out of sin itself by living it through with constancy.

Byron was ready to sacrifice everything for Augusta, and to defy the world with her. If this had not been prevented, he would have been a more poetical figure in history than as the author of "Manfred" and all the poems of despair and *ennui* born of a solitude amidst unmentionable women. Misery and inaction were what drove him to verse. He wrote, as a lark in a cage, "non canta d'amor ma di rabbia." He might never have written a line of poetry if he could have done and lived the things that were natural to him. How he would have treated Augusta if once completely in his power, is hard to guess. Lady Melbourne had predicted that they would end by reproaching each other reciprocally for their inevitable unhappiness. Augusta may have had her own misgivings as to this, though at the height of her passion she was an utter fool about him, saw nothing except with his eyes, and thought only of merging her identity and existence in his, "Dearest, first and best of

human beings," as she called him.[1] She once said to Lady Byron in December, 1815: "Ah—you don't know *what* a fool I have been about him!"[2] In her blindness she knew not that her secret was already betrayed even in detail and in writing to other women.

She certainly was not spared misery or degradation by being preserved from flagrant acts; for nothing could be more wretched than her subsequent existence; and, far from growing virtuous, she went farther down without end temporally and spiritually. Character regained was the consummation of Mrs. Leigh's ruin. Her return to outward respectability was an unmixed misfortune to the third person through whose protection it was possible. For if Augusta fled to Byron in exile, was seen with him as *et soror et conjux*, the victory remained with Lady Byron, solid and final. This was the solution hoped for by Lady Byron's friends, Lushington and Doyle, as well as Lady Noel; who all rightly wished to prevent or end false and intolerable relations.[3] Their triumph and Lady Byron's justification would have been complete, and great would have been their rejoicing. But with her the romance of self-sacrifice was all-powerful. She dreamed of miracles, of Augusta purified from sin. Then she thought of the disgrace and scandal, the distress of Augusta's connections. Wilmot and Mrs. Villiers, too, were pressing her hard to be kind to Augusta, win her confidence, save her from losing her character in England and rushing off to destruction. They had both come to execrate Byron as wickedness personified, desired to thwart him and interfere with the triumph of his plans. Mrs. Villiers was still deeply attached to Augusta, and

[1] "The day after my marriage he had a letter from her—it affected him strangely—and excited a kind of fierce and exulting transport. He read to me the expression, 'Dearest, first and best of human beings,' and then said with suspicious inquisitiveness, 'There—what do you think of that?'" (Lady Byron's Narrative, Q.)

[2] Lady Byron's Statement, G.

[3] Lady Noel strongly and repeatedly warned Lady Byron against Mrs. Leigh; for example, on September 7th, 1816, she wrote: "*Once more* take care of + (the symbol used by Byron and others for Augusta). If I know anything of human nature she *does* and must *hate you*."

Wilmot, though very angry with his unfortunate cousin, naturally wished to stifle the talk about her. Thus was a false position perpetuated for generation after generation. A cloud of misunderstanding was allowed to darken the Byron history, and has hung thick and weary upon his race. His personality and genius have been effaced under laudatory fallacies which would otherwise have been impossible.

It was the fatality of events which drove Lady Byron to intervene and prevent things from taking their natural course. She cannot be blamed for the evils which followed, and to herself most of all. It was her interest that Augusta should join Byron abroad and never return, but it was impossible for her to desire or connive at such an event, and she thought it her duty strenuously to oppose it. To the last she preserved the illusion that it had been well to interfere, and that she had saved them both from additional guilt.

Byron had given his solemn word of honour to Augusta that he never had betrayed her either to Lady Byron or to anyone else, or said anything that could give rise to a report about her; and she declared just after parting from him in April, 1816, that "she must believe his word, *could* not, *would* not believe him dishonourable." Her infatuation continued to increase in his absence—so much that Mrs. Villiers apprehended she would go abroad to him at the first opportunity, and said it was "of the utmost importance that her feelings towards him should be changed, and the sooner the better." This could only be done by informing her how completely he had committed her, "even betrayed her in writing to two or three women."[1] Thus was Lady Byron induced to resume correspondence with Mrs. Leigh, and by degrees to detach her from Lord Byron. The discovery of what Byron had said and written of Augusta became a powerful motive for her to play the game of entire submission to Lady Byron's guidance. On August 5th, Augusta wrote that she felt most

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, May 18th, 1816.

solemnly Byron had not been her friend, and that though there were difficulties in writing to him that she would never see him again, she was determined that nothing should induce her to see him again in the way she had done.[1] Augusta's so-called rescue was worked; and Lady Byron had sacrificed herself in vain.

Lady Byron came to London for a fortnight's stay in lodgings on August 31st, and again saw Augusta, who was at St. James's Palace; indeed, she saw her most days during that stay as well as Mrs. Villiers.[2] Augusta then made full confession of the previous connection—any subsequent to Lady Byron's marriage being stoutly denied. Lady Byron had sometimes been inclined to think that Mrs. Leigh might have feigned resistance to Lord Byron's wishes before her and permitted them in private.

Lady Byron wrote (in 1817) of these meetings with Augusta:

"She acknowledged that the verses ('I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name') of which I have the original, were addressed to her. She told me that she had never felt any suspicions of my suspicions except at the time in the summer of 1815 when I evidently wished she would leave us, but she had often told him he said such things before me as would have led *any other* woman to suspect. He reassured her when these doubts occurred, and she seems to have acted upon the principle that what could be concealed from me was no injury.

"She denied that during the business of the separation he had ever addressed any criminal proposals to her.

"Augusta told me that she had never seen remorse for his guilt towards her in him but once—the night before they last parted, previous to his going abroad."[3]

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron, August 5th, 1816.

[2] From July 11th to September 14th, 1816, Mrs. Leigh never left St. James's Palace. She and Lady Byron were not inmates of the same house, either there or anywhere else, after the separation. A contemporary invention that Lady Byron went to live with Mrs. Leigh was embellished by a fabulist of 1869 into the statement that Lady Byron visited Mrs. Leigh near Newmarket in 1816; the fact being that Lady Byron was only once in her life at Six Mile Bottom, viz.: with Lord Byron from March 12th to March 28th, 1815.

[3] Statements G and K.

Augusta also admitted her guilt—somewhat less fully and explicitly—to Mrs. Villiers at that time. Mrs. Villiers was sceptical of Augusta's entire innocence after marriage, especially during the period after Lady Byron left, when Augusta permitted personal familiarities which astonished George Byron, and also seemed entirely to change her opinion respecting the rights of the separation. Mrs. Villiers thought Lord Byron would never have missed such an opportunity of securing the continuation of her submission.[1]

Mrs. Villiers wrote to Augusta that she "considered her the victim to the most infernal plot that had ever entered the heart of man to conceive . . . that her [Mrs. Villiers'] horror, detestation and execration of the person who had beguiled and betrayed Augusta exceeded all powers of expression."[2]

Of this letter of Mrs. Villiers, Augusta wrote to Lady Byron from Six Mile Bottom (September 17th, 1816):

"I shall be glad that you see M^rs^ Villiers again— . . . She terms you my *Guardian Angel* & I am sure you are so—Towards *another* person—she is *very* violent in her expressions of resentment—& it is I daresay very natural but I think it better not to say a word in answer—tho' in fact I *am* the one *much* the most to blame—& *quite* inexcusable—You know—I trust—that I am anxious to make every atonement—& will assist me—"

Lady Byron was not under a complete illusion about Augusta's repentance and gratitude. She felt little doubt that Augusta would readily turn upon her as an enemy some day, as it was very difficult for one woman to forgive another such a humiliating position. For the time, however, Augusta submitted completely to guidance—showed all Lord Byron's letters as she received them to Lady Byron, and answered him in the most guarded way.

Mrs. Leigh was to have been the child's godmother.

[1] Lady Byron to Mrs. Villiers, November 2nd, and Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, November 5th, 1816.

[2] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, September 15th, 1816.

In those days the real christening often took place long after the baptismal registration, which in this case had taken place while Lady Byron was still confined to her room. On November 1st, 1816, Ada was christened; Captain Byron being godfather, Lady Byron's mother and Lady Tamworth the godmothers. The change was not announced to Mrs. Leigh, though she heard something about it, and wrote to inquire, apparently without receiving any answer, which was doubtless best, as, though Lady Byron was unwilling to allow Augusta more than a restricted intercourse with the little Augusta Ada, and had an insurmountable repugnance to the child's being in her company, she could not bear to distance her for that reason in so many words, though she might have done so consistently with what she always told her on that subject.[1]

When he had gone abroad, Byron wrote to Augusta with passionate affection—love letters which were afterwards shown to Lady Byron, whose advice was asked how they could be stopped, when Augusta had put herself absolutely, though temporarily, into Lady Byron's hands. On September 17th, Byron wrote to urge Augusta to join him abroad, and on or before October 13th she answered by Lady Byron's direction that such a step would be equally ruinous to himself, her, and her children, and that she hoped he would feel that such views must now be relinquished. At the same time she wrote very coldly about meeting him again, or his returning to England. He at once suspected the letter to have been prompted by Lady Byron, and his exasperation against Augusta and Lady Byron, for the one having fallen under the influence of the other, was extreme, and went on increasing till it culminated in "Manfred." Under Augusta's "absurd obscure hinting style of writing,"—"full of megrims and mysteries," Byron read clearly two things: that Augusta threatened not to see him, if he returned, either at her own house or his, or except in the presence of other people. He compre-

[1] Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, November 11th, 1818.

hended secondly that Lady Byron forbade Augusta ever to meet him again.[1]

After Waterloo he had wished for Castlereagh's head on a pike. Now his most sanguinary language was reserved for domestic enemies, amongst whom he included his nearest blood relations, as well as those of Lady Byron. He appealed to Heaven for a proscription by the side of which that of Collot d'Herbois should seem a mere idyll. To Lady Byron and her parents, George Byron, Robert Wilmot, he promised that "not a fibre of their hearts should remain unsearched by fire." His bitterness was most undying against Lady Byron's mother, about whom he wrote four years later:

"She [Lady Noel] is too troublesome an old woman ever to die while her death can do any good—but if she ever does march—it is to be presumed that she will take her 'water divining rod' with her—it may be a useful twig to her & the devil too—when she gets home again."[2]

For Augusta he reserved in "Manfred" a special "guillotine axe to shear away her vainly whimpering head."[3] Just as "Manfred" was coming out, he wrote a few bitter reproaches to her for behaving so coldly when he was ready to have sacrificed everything for her. He said it was "on her account principally that he had given way at all and signed the separation, for he thought

[1] See extracts from Lord Byron's letters, page 79. [See also Chapter XI.]

[2] Lady Noel was a water-finder. The detestation was thoroughly reciprocal. She wrote to Lady Byron (August 2nd, 1818):

"Lady Calthorpe has a letter from her Daughter written at *Venice*, where she has seen Lord Byron. You may imagine in what terms she speaks of him—

"the only new particular is, that he has quarrelled with and dismissed the married lady, and supplied her place, by a Girl of *sixteen*—

"I conclude you have heard that his black-haired Daughter is sent to him at Venice—

"but no more on such a polluted subject—I will begin with some other on a Virgin Page—"

But from her deathbed Lady Noel desired a message of "her forgiveness" to be sent to Lord Byron. It was not in her character to launch an insolence in the form of a dying forgiveness, but there is reason to fear that her words—perhaps uttered when she was almost severed from the power of expression—did not and could not soften Lord Byron.

[3] Written in the "French Revolution," Book I, Chapter iv, of the Comtesse du Barry, "unfortunate female" yet "unmalignant, not unpitiable thing."

they would endeavour to drag her into it, although they had no business with anything previous to his marriage with that infernal fiend whose destruction he should yet see." [1]

After this he wrote no more to Augusta for nearly nine months, and she expressed the opinion that she was now hated by him.

When Manfred was published, "nothing could have saved Augusta in the eyes of the whole world but want of faith in his veracity"—a very unfounded disbelief. "No avowal can be more complete," wrote Mrs. Villiers. "It is too barefaced for her friends to attempt to deny the allusion. All that appeared to me practicable I have done with her own family, who have all spoke to me about it. I have said that I had long been aware that his whole object was to ruin others, and particularly those to whom he owed the most, and that I had long been convinced of his wish to confirm the reports of last year to Augusta's prejudice.

"Did you see the newspaper called 'The Day and New Times' of the 23rd June? There is a long critique on 'Manfred' ably done, I think, but the allusions to Augusta dreadfully clear. Lady Chichester brought it to me!" [2]

The sacrifice of Lord Byron's character for veracity was of course cordially made by Mrs. Leigh's brothers and sisters, Lady Chichester, the Duke of Leeds,[3] and Lord Francis Godolphin Osborne, who could not but be willing to be deceived. More strangely, the general

[1] Lord Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, June 19th, 1817.

[2] The Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, July 6th, 1817. No copy of this newspaper exists in the British Museum, and whether any copy of it still exists has not been ascertained. Dr. John Stoddart, Hazlitt's brother-in-law, and once connected with "The Times," quitted that paper in January, 1817, and edited "The Day," which was from that time for some months entitled "The Day and New Times." But before long the word "Day" was left out, and in 1818 Dr. Stoddart's newspaper was called "The New Times" alone.

[3] By Lady Blessington's account, Lord Byron, who bore no malice, and in a short time often lost the very recollection of his own violences, thought it odd that the Duke of Leeds did not call on him at Genoa in 1823! But it was no wonder if Mrs. Leigh's half-brother on the mother's side never forgot or forgave Manfred.

public, with the stupidity of doves, helped by the caution of the more experienced serpents of the world and the Court, was determined to discover in Mrs. Leigh nothing more than a deserving "maid of honour" [1] to Queen Charlotte. Augusta herself expressed the opinion that she was now hated by the Manfred who descended to Hades to uncharnel the wraith of Astarte. His love certainly was as implacable as Nemesis. He was a master of dire enchantments to transfix hearts. Astarte was haunted and ridden by a spectral Astarte vivified for a flash of time out of the eternal silences to prophesy judgment by the infernal gods upon Manfred.

Lord Byron's long silence lasted till March, 1818, when he again wrote to Augusta from Venice.

He attributed his long silence to *her* having plagued him with letters full of *hints and grievances he could not understand!* encomiums of *Lady Byron*—gossip about a flock of Idiots. He asked whether "Manfred" had not caused "a pucker."

So at least Augusta described the letter to Lady Byron. Augusta said that this most unfeeling and almost insulting manner of remarking upon "Manfred" had given her the opportunity to reply:

"A propos of 'puckers' I thought there was unkindness which I did not expect in doing what was but too sure to cause one—& so—I said nothing—& perhaps should not but for y^{r} questions"—

Augusta adds to Lady Byron about the letter from Venice:

"A more melancholy one I can't well imagine—such anger & hatred & bitterness to *all*—only fit for y^{e} fire—in short it's plain to me he is angry with *himself* poor fellow! what a dreadful existence—the only acc^{t} of himself—& his proceedings is a dreadful one—& I suppose intended to vex & perplex me—as is *very evidently the whole letter*."

[1] So at least Lord Byron affected to call her. He wrote to Augusta during the last illness of her royal mistress: "If the Queen dies you are no more a Maid of Honour—is it not so? . . ."

After this he wrote to Augusta at short intervals, in the most varying moods.

Before proceeding to the important documents which will be recorded in Chapter IV, the substance of Lord Byron's strange poetical manifesto of June, 1817, must be noticed.

The following extracts from "Manfred" contain a sort of transfiguration of terribly real feelings and circumstances into a haunting apparition.

Act III. Scene 3.

MANUEL.

That was a night indeed! I do remember
'Twas twilight, as it may be now, and such
Another evening;—yon red cloud, which rests
On Eigher's pinnacle, so rested then—
So like that it might be the same; the wind
Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
Began to glitter with the climbing moon;
Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,—
How occupied, we knew not, but with him
The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings—her, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love,—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The lady Astarte, his—

HERMAN.

Look—look—the tower—
The tower's on fire.

Act I. Scene 1.

Let him
Who is most powerful of ye, take such aspect
As unto him may seem most fitting—Come!

SEVENTH SPIRIT (*appearing in the shape of a beautiful female figure*).

Behold!

MANFRED.

Oh God! if it be thus, and *thou*
Art not a madness and a mockery,
I yet might be most happy. I will clasp thee,
And we again will be—[*The figure vanishes*]—My heart is
crush'd! [MANFRED *falls senseless.*

ACT II. SCENE 1.

MANFRED.

There's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never—never sink in the earth?

* * *

I say 'tis blood—my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this was shed; but still it rises up,
Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from heaven,
Where thou art not—and I shall never be.

* * *

Oh! no, no, *no!*
My injuries came down on those who loved me—
On those whom I best loved; I never quell'd
An enemy, save in my just defence—
But my embrace was fatal.

ACT II. SCENE 2.

Though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
Nor midst the creatures of clay that girded me
Was there but one who—but of her anon.

* * *

I have not named to thee
Father or mother, mistress, friend or being
With whom I wore a chain of human ties;
If I had such, they seem'd not such to me—
Yet there was one—

* * *

She was like me in lineaments—her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine ;
But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty ;
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe ; nor these
Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
Pity, and smiles, and tears—which I had not
And tenderness—but that I had for her ;
Humility—and that I never had.
Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own—
I lov'd her, and destroy'd her !

* * *

Not with my hand, but heart—which broke her heart—
It gazed on mine, and wither'd. I have shed
Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed—
I saw—and could not stanch it.

* * *

Daughter of Air ! I tell thee since that hour—

* * *

My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies.

* * *

If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living ; had I never loved,
That which I love would still be beautiful—
Happy and giving happiness. What is she ?
What is she now ?—a sufferer for my sins—
A thing I dare not think upon—or nothing.

Act II. Scene 4.

NEMESIS.

Whom wouldst thou
Uncharnel ?

MANFRED.

One without a tomb—call up
Astarte.

NEMESIS.

Shadow ! or Spirit !
Whatever thou art,

* * *

Appear !—Appear !—Appear !
Who sent thee there requires thee here !

[*The Phantom of* ASTARTE *rises and stands in the midst.*

MANFRED.

Can this be death ? there's bloom upon her cheek ;
But now I see it is no living hue,
But a strange hectic—like the unnatural red
Which Autumn paints upon the perish'd leaf
It is the same ! Oh, God ! that I should dread
To look upon the same—Astarte !—No,
I cannot speak to her—but bid her speak—
Forgive me or condemn me.

NEMESIS.

By the power which hath broken
The grave which enthrall'd thee,
Speak to him who hath spoken,
Or those who have call'd thee !

MANFRED.

She is silent,
And in that silence I am answer'd.

* * *

NEMESIS.

* *

She is not of our order, but belongs
To the other powers. Mortal ! thy quest is vain,
And we are baffled also.

MANFRED.

Hear me, hear me—
Astarte ! my beloved ! speak to me ;

I have so much endured—so much endure—
Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee; we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blessed—and that I shall die;
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence—in a life
Which makes me shrink from immortality—
A future like the past. I cannot rest.
I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:
I feel but what thou art—and what I am;
And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music—Speak to me!
For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd boughs,
And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answer'd me—many things answer'd me—
Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all.
Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee.
Speak to me! I have wander'd o'er the earth,
And never found thy likeness—Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around—they feel for me!
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone—
Speak to me! though it be in wrath;—but say—
I reck not what—but let me hear thee once—
This once—once more!

PHANTOM OF ASTARTE.

Manfred!

MANFRED.

Say on, say on—
I live but in the sound—it is thy voice!

PHANTOM.

Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly ills.
Farewell!

MANFRED.

Yet one word more—am I forgiven?

PHANTOM.

Farewell!

MANFRED.

Say, shall we meet again?

PHANTOM.

Farewell!

MANFRED.

One word for mercy! Say, thou lovest me.

PHANTOM.

Manfred! [*The Spirit of* ASTARTE *disappears*

NEMESIS.

She's gone and will not be recall'd;
Her words will be fulfill'd. Return to earth.

ACT III. SCENE 4.

ABBOT.

I see a dusk and awful figure rise,
Like an infernal god, from out the earth;
His face wrapt in a mantle, and his form
Robed as with angry clouds; he stands between
Thyself and me—but I do fear him not.

* * *

Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?
Ah! he unveils his aspect; on his brow
The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye
Glares forth the immortality of Hell—

* * *

What art thou, unknown being? Answer!—speak!

SPIRIT.

The genius of this mortal.—Come! 'tis time.

* * *

MANFRED.

I knew, and know my hour is come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee;
Away! I'll die as I have lived—alone.

* * *

My life is in it's last hour—*that* I know
Nor would redeem a moment of that hour;
I do not combat against death, but thee
And thy surrounding angels.

* * *

SPIRIT.

But thy many crimes
Have made thee——

MANFRED.

What are they to such as thee?
Must crimes be punish'd but by other crimes,
And greater criminals?—Back to thy hell!

* * *

What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine;
The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
In its own origin of ill and end—
And its own place and time—its innate sense
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without;
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own deserts
The hand of death is on me—but not yours!

[*The* Demons *disappear.*

ABBOT.

Alas! how pale thou art—thy lips are white—
And thy breast heaves—and in thy gasping throat

The accents rattle—Give thy prayers to Heaven—
Pray—albeit but in thought—but die not thus.

MANFRED.

'Tis over—my dull eyes can fix thee not ;
But all things swim around me, and the earth
Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well.

The germ of this nightmare in blank verse was in the actual letters to the living Astarte, many of which she destroyed ; but in the fragments which remain some of the ideas, and almost the very words, are still to be found which were developed into the incantations of Manfred.

Some passages taken at random will illustrate the affinity of the poem with the letters to her whom Byron addressed as "My Heart!" in the days

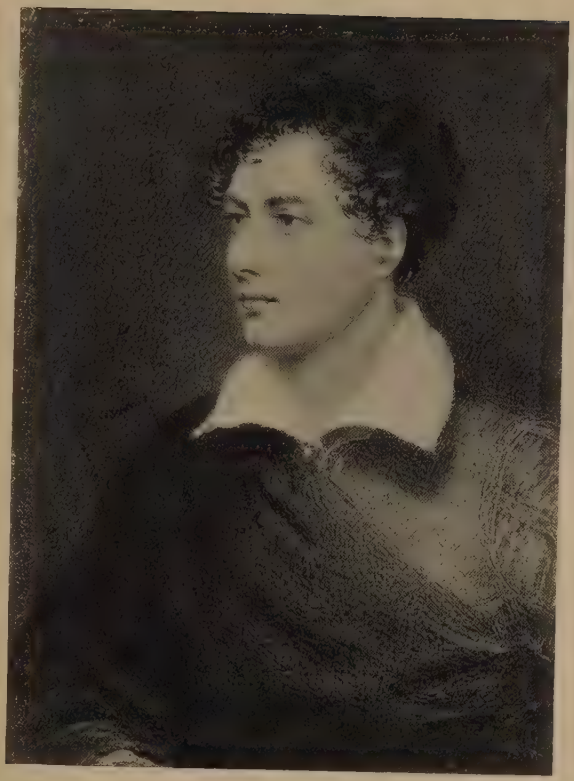
"when I was 'gentle and juvenile—curly and gay,' and was myself in love with a certain silly person—and who was she—can *you* guess ?"

"Your confidential letter is safe—and all the others. This one has cut me to the heart because I have made you uneasy—Still I think all these apprehensions—very groundless—"

"do not be uneasy—and do not 'hate yourself'—if you hate either let it be *me*—but do not—it would kill me ;—we are the last persons in the world—who ought—or could cease to love one another—"

"Your having seen my daughter is to me a great satisfaction. It is as if I had seen her myself—Next to you dearest she is nearly all I have to look forward to with hope or pleasure in this world—perhaps she may also disappoint and distress me—"

"This Country is altogether the paradise of wilderness. I wish you were in it with me and everyone else out of it —love me—A.—ever thine."



LORD BYRON

From a Miniature formerly belonging to his sister Augusta, by J. Holmes (1814)

" I would return from any distance at any time to see you—and come to England for you—"

" What a fool I was to marry—and *you* not very wise —my dear—we might have lived so single and so happy —as old maids & batchelors ;—I shall never find any one like you—nor you—(vain as it may seem) like me—we are just formed to pass our lives together,—and therefore —we—at least—I—am by a crowd of circumstances removed from the only being who could ever have loved me—or whom I can unmixedly feel attached to—"

" a *thousand loves*—to *you* from *me*—which is very generous for I only ask *one* in return."

" I really do not & cannot understand all the mysteries & alarms in your letters—& more particularly in the last —all I know is—that—no human power—short of destruction—shall prevent me from seeing you when— where—& how—I may please—according to time and circumstance—that you are the only comfort (except the remote possibility of my daughter's being so) left me in prospect in existence, and that I can bear the rest—so that you remain—but any thing which is to divide us would drive me quite out of my senses ;—"

" You surely do not mean to say that if I come to England in Spring—that you & I shall not meet ?—If so I will never return to it—"

" I know nothing of what you are in the doldrums about at present—I should think—all that could affect you—must have been over long ago—& as for me—leave me to take care of myself—"

" it would be much better at once to explain your mysteries—than to go on with this absurd obscure hinting style of writing—What do you mean ?—what is there known ? or can be known ? which *you* & *I* do not know much better ? & what concealment can you have from me ?—*I* never shrank—"

"You say nothing in favour of my return to England —Very well—I will stay where I am—and you will never see me more."

"I always loved you better than any earthly existence, and I always shall unless I go mad——" [1]

[1 The full text of the letters from which these passages are quoted will be found in Chapter XI.—Ed.]

CHAPTER IV

SOME CORRESPONDENCE OF AUGUSTA BYRON

"Im garten der liebe, da welken die rosen,
Es fliehen, es flattern zu anderem ort
Die lustigen vöglein und falter, die losen,
Denn die Minne, die goldene Minne, zieht fort.
Und kalt wird dein herz, das voreinsten so glühte,
Und trübe der augen hellstrahlendes paar;
Und blass wird die lippe, die purpurn einst blühte,
Und silbern—und silbern dein goldenes haar."

SCHULTE VON BRÜHL.

THE detached extracts given at the close of the last chapter are mostly from the letters of 1816 and 1817, and reflect the state of mind also expressed in "Manfred," for comparison with which the dates are unnecessary.

There is, however, another letter written in a similar spirit two years later, which is so important both in itself and on account of the subsequent correspondence which it occasioned between Mrs. Leigh and Lady Byron, that it must be given *in extenso*:

LORD BYRON TO THE HON: MRS: LEIGH.

Superscription:

To [Name effaced by Mrs. Leigh]
to the care of Jn° Murray Esq^r [1]
50 Albemarle S^t
London
Angleterre

Inghilterra

Venice [Monday] May 17th 1819.

May 17th 1819

My dearest Love—

I have been negligent in not writing, but what can I say Three years absence—& the total change of

[1] [Nearly all Byron's letters to Mrs. Leigh of this period are thus addressed.]

scene and habit make such a difference—that we have now[1] nothing in common but our affections & our relationship.—

But I have never ceased nor can cease to feel for a moment that perfect & boundless attachment which bound & binds me to you—which renders me utterly incapable of *real* love for any other human being—for what could they be to me after *you?* My own xxxx[2] we may have been very wrong—but I repent of nothing except that cursed marriage—& your refusing to continue to love me as you had loved me—I can neither forget nor *quite forgive* you for that precious piece of reformation.—but I can never be other than I have been—and whenever I love anything it is because it reminds me in some way or other of yourself—for instance I not long ago attached myself to a Venetian for no earthly reason (although a pretty woman) but because she was called xxxx[2] and she often remarked (without knowing the reason) how fond I was of the name.—It is heart-breaking to think of our long Separation—and I am sure more than punishment enough for all our sins—Dante is more humane in his " Hell " for he places his unfortunate lovers (Francesca of Rimini & Paolo whose case fell a good deal short of *ours*—though sufficiently naughty) in company—and though they suffer—it is at least together.—If ever I return to England—it will be to see you—and recollect that in all time—& place—and feelings—I have never ceased to be the same to you in heart—Circumstances may have ruffled my manner—& hardened my spirit—you may have seen me harsh & exasperated with all things around me; grieved & tortured with *your new resolution*,—& the soon after persecution of that infamous fiend who drove me from my Country & conspired against my life—by endeavouring to deprive me of all that could render it precious—but remember that even then *you* were the sole object that cost me a tear? and *what tears!* do you remember *our* parting? I have not spirits now

[1] [This is misprinted " never " in original edition.]
[2] Short name of three or four letters obliterated.

to write to you upon other subjects—I am well in health —and have no cause of grief but the reflection that we are not together—When you write to me speak to me of yourself—& say that you love me—never mind commonplace people & topics—which can be in no degree interesting—to me who see nothing in England but the country which holds *you*—or around it but the sea which divides us.—They say absence destroys weak passions—& confirms strong ones—Alas ! *mine* for you is the union of all passions & of all affections—Has strengthened itself but will destroy me—I do not speak of *physical* destruction—for I have endured & can endure much—but of the annihilation of all thoughts feelings or hopes—which have not more or less a reference to you & to *our recollections*—

Ever dearest

[Signature erased]

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

Right Hon^ble
Lady Byron
Tunbridge Wells
Chichester

Friday [June 25, 1819]

My dearest A—

I have been *pining* for a letter from you—& am afraid I should not have left you in peace so long—had I not heard thro M^rs G V— that you had arrived safe & well—I am glad you found your Mother improving in health—& that y^e place agrees with you—but you tell me not a word in particular of your own health & whether you have tried y^e Waters—I am pleased that Ada has been so with Noah &c.

As for Mazeppa & Appendages I am all astonishment not knowing it was *out*—what are the Appendages my dear A ? not the *Don* I hope—I think I shall never read another of those performances,—I have just got M^rs Hoares Book which I mean to study & the new Tales are awaiting my leisure or my inclination to read Some way or other I have not had energy of mind or body for any

thing of late—& all I do is an effort—You were not wrong in thinking me depressed & oppressed my dear A when we met—& certainly the sight of dear Ada contributed in a great degree to *unnerve* me—I'm sorry you discovered it—& I need not dwell on all the painful feelings it occasioned & which you can enter into—I will only tell you of my pleasure in seeing her *all* you could wish. I never saw—*prejugés a part* so very engaging a Child—I might say a great deal of her tractability—& your good management—but as you hate praises & I am very awkward about expressing my approbation & admiration I will not dwell on that either.

I felt greatly annoyed at not seeing you again *alone*—before you left [London], as I had made up my mind to what I am now doing—tho' I am not clear I may be acting right, & it has been made and unmade on the subject 20 times—Yet I can safely affirm not on *my own* acc[t] have I doubted—I really must enclose y[e] last letter I spoke to you of—for I have endeavoured in vain, in *thought* & *deed* to reply to it—I am *so afraid* of saying what might do harm—or omitting any possible good—burn it—& tell me you have & answer me as soon as you can—I shall be *anxious*—& my unusually long silence *may* cause agitation—which I always avoid—in short he is surely to be considered a *Maniac*—*I* do not believe any feelings expressed are by any means permanent—only occasioned by y[e] passing & present reflection & occupation of writing to the unfortunate Being to whom they are addressed—

pray pardon me if you think me wrong—for I do not mean it to be so—tho I am convinced there are many w[d] condemn the act as an *insult* but it is y[r] advice & superior judgment that is wished for. Independent of this misery I have plenty of *Home* ones—but I will not worry you dear A—The Babes are well. I am hurried for post having unexpectedly got this frank [1] & being anxious not to delay—God bless you ever & ever

[1] From Lord Chichester, see superscription.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Tunbridge Wells
[Sunday] June 27th
1819.

My dearest A—

It is impossible that I could mistake your motives for sending me the enclosed letter—As it opens nothing new to me in regard to the writer's mind, it gives me no other pain than what arises from feeling for *your* grief in receiving a fresh proof of the continuance of that passion which you most wish to be extinguished. I have looked anxiously for such appearances of incoherency as could justify your idea of its being mere raving. Incapable as he is of the true attachment, which is devoted to the welfare of its object, I have before observed to you that in the intervals of every pursuit which engaged him by its novelty, this most dreadful fever of the heart has returned—In such cases, unless a purifying repentance has taken place there can be no medium between aversion & love—This well known fact in the nature of man—should form a ground of conduct—You have indeed made it so by avoiding every expression that could encourage tenderness—& this letter is an ample testimony of your having done so, as well as of the prior "reformation" which was sufficiently evidenced to *me* by your own assertion & the agreement of circumstances with it—But in case of a more unequivocal disclosure on his part than has yet been made, this letter would confute those false accusations—to which you would undoubtedly be subjected from others—Still I am aware of the danger of not burning it. I however prefer returning it to you—and I shall not enclose, that there may be more perfect security of its delivery.

But in regard to your conduct—There appear to me to be but two ways of proceeding which are at all reconcileable with those principles by which you are governed—

The first alternative is to reply that after so unequivocal a proof that the idea of you was associated with the most guilty feelings, you considered it your duty to break

off all communication—being convinced that it must be attended with the danger of keeping them alive—that your anxiety for his welfare could not be more strongly proved than by a resolution which might expose you to his resentment, but which was dictated by the strongest sense of duty towards him, as well as towards yourself—

The other alternative is—to take no notice of having received the letter—for if you notice it at all, it must be in my opinion in such terms as above—but to continue the correspondence in the same style of guarded propriety which seems to [have] piqued him to make this impassioned, tho as appears to me, artfully studied address, to recover his ascendancy—

Considering you as an *individual*, I should not hesitate to say that the first was absolutely incumbent upon you —Considering you with reference to your domestic ties, the determination of the question must be influenced by your opinion of the probable consequences—If I felt that I could calculate them with confidence, I would not shrink from the responsibility of advising you—but I cannot—Indeed I fear that he will nor let you rest till he has done you the greatest temporal injury—& that you can only avert it a little longer by any mode of conduct—I wish with all my heart that I could express more consolatory opinions—but your consolations must come from a different source—and I trust they will encrease with your trials—

I will write to you about myself soon—and tell me what you do—tho' I feel sure that the gentler expedient will appear to you the best. We must act consistently with *our own* opinions, not with those even of the persons we most esteem—if we would secure the peace of retrospect—Endeavour to clear your ideas as to what your relative duties require, act according to the best conclusions you can form, and then rest in the feeling that " duties are ours—events are God's "—

Ever yours most affec[ly]

A I B

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

London June twenty eight 1819
The
Lady Byron
Tunbridge Wells
Fred Bentinck

[Monday] June 28 [1819]

Your letter &c has arrived safely my dearest A & a million of thanks for y^r^ kindness—*Decision* was never my *forte* in any circumstances—& God knows in such as y^e^ present, y^e^ difficulty I feel & shall feel—yet—one ought to act (as far as one can) *right* & leave the issue to Providence.—

I will tell you what *now* passes in my mind. As to the *gentler* expedient you propose, I certainly lean to it—as the least offensive—but—supposing he suspects the motive & is piqued to answer, "I wrote you such a letter of such a date? Did you receive it?" What then is to be done—I could not reply falsely—& might not that line of conduct acknowledged—irritate? This consideration w^d^ lead me perhaps—preferably—to adopt the other—as most open & honest—(certainly to any other Character but his—) but, query whether it might not be most judicious as to its effects—*and* at the same time acknowledging that his Victim was wholly in his power, as to temporal good & leaving it to his generosity whether to use that power—if not dead to every Spark of good feeling—or not partially insane—I think—I cannot but think—it might be best—but to *determine* those questions is difficult—in either case to be acting right would be one's consolation.

There seem so many reasons why he should for his own sake abstain *for the present* from *gratifying* his revenge that one can scarcely think he would do so—unless *insane*—it w^d^ surely be ruin to *all* his prospects—& those of a pecuniary nature are not indifferent—if *others* are become so—

if really & truly he feels or fancies he feels—that

passion he professes I have constantly imagined he might suppose from his experience of the *weakness* of disposition, of the unfortunate Object, that driven from every other hope or earthly prospect she might fly to *him!* & that as long as he was impressed with that idea he w^d persevere in his projects—but if he considered *that* hopeless, he might desist—for otherwise he must lose every thing—*but his Revenge*, & what good w^d *that* do him!—

After all my dearest A— if you cannot calculate the probable consequences, how should I presume to do so! To be sure the gentler expedient, might be y^e safest—with so violent & irritable a disposition & at least *for a* time act as a *palliative*—& who knows what changes a little time might produce or how Providence might graciously interpose—with so many reasons to wish to avoid extremities (I mean for y^e sake of others) one leans to what appears the *safest* & one is a Coward—

But the other at the same time has something gratifying to one's feelings—& I think might be said & done—so that, if he showed y^e letters, it would be no evidence ag^st *the* Person—& worded with that kindness, & appearance of real affec^te concern for *him* as well as the other person concerned that it *might* possibly touch him. Pray—think of what I have *thought* & write me a line not to decide for that I cannot expect, but to tell me if I deceived myself in the ideas I have expressed to you—I shall not *cannot* answer till y^e *latest* post day this week—

I know you will forgive me for this infliction & may God bless you for that & every other kindness—

Extract from Letter from the Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.

[Friday, July 2, 1819]

1000 thanks for y^r hint about *letters*—I scarcely know whether to risk keeping that you saw—

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

London July third 1819
The
Lady Byron
Tunbridge Wells
Fred Bentinck

[Saturday, July 3, 1819]

My dearest A—

Having a frank I write a line—I was in such a hurry yesterday having waited for M— all day—I'm afraid my letter may have appeared to you—as treating the subject too lightly—but indeed no one can be more fully aware of the *Precipice* on which I stand than I am —but situated *as I am*—I feel that—if once I gave way to despair I could never shake it off & should be unfitted for every thing—as this w^d^ be adding to the evil, I do all I can to avoid it—& I hope it is not presumptuous to *trust* in that Power who alone can shield & protect—

I have not heard any more of what you apprehended —I own I cannot *for y^e^ present* fear more than this detestable production the Poem—God bless you dearest A— & forgive my plaguing you so but I could not resist sending a line—pray write to y^r^ affec^e^ & grateful

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

London Dec^r^ Twenty one 1819
The
Lady Byron
Kirkby Mallory
Hinckley
W Howard

[Tuesday] Dec^r^ 21. 1819

My dearest A— The enclosed [1] came last night—& I fear looks too like certainty respecting *the return*—Anything you may wish to be said relative to the chief subject—pray address to me on a *separate* sheet—I am determined to give *no opinions* of *mine*—& wish the

[1] [See Chap. XI., letter of Dec. 4.]

Will in question was burn't—I'm sure I do not know how to address a letter to *Calais*—it being out of the question to *give him welcome to Eng*^{d}—alas! how melancholy that it s^{d} be so—Luckily— (or *un*luckily perhaps) I do not die easily—or I think this stroke w^{d} about finish me—however my trust is in Providence—& the agitation caused by the first intelligence of such a mournful prospect has subsided into a *dead calm*—I'm sure I am very selfish to have said all this ab^{t} myself—but indeed I think of & feel for *you*—all day long—and I am *so* sorry for your Parents—all this you will believe dearest dear A—altho' I can not fully express it—M^{rs} V. called yesterday—from her looks, I guess she is ignorant—she mentioned a letter from you saying you w^{d} be here early in Jan^{y}——Let me hear about this——

Murray sent me a letter to him—of the same date as that I enclose—it was chiefly on y^{e} subject of D. J.[1] & an application to the Chancellor—about the publication of it by others—discussing this he says—to this effect—" You may do as you please but recollect *if* it is pronounced blasphemous or indecent, I shall lose all right of Guardianship &c &c (I forget the exact expressions) *in y*^{e} *education* of my Daugh^{t} "—& gives an instance of y^{e} same in that infamous M^{r} Shelley's case,—[2] he then *justly* & handsomely enough says it is hard M—should pay for y^{e} Poem—all things considered & that y^{e} Money being untouched shall be his again—which I fear the latter will not listen to— The letter ends by saying his return to Eng— was unlooked for but he has given his reason in letters to his Sister & D. K.[3]—I tell you this (I mean about the Poem) as it may give you my guess of *probabilities* relative to Ada— My own opinion is he will be pretty quiet on *her* subject—

[1] [" Don Juan."]

[2] Mrs. Leigh would not have claimed to have read or to understand " that infamous Mr. Shelley," and merely repeated a phrase of Murrayish or some equally Bowdlerite origin; it certainly could not represent Lord Byron's judgment.

[3] [Douglas Kinnaird.]

but do not say *a word* to *any* of *your* friends—nor indeed to *any one*=even *our own* relations that I have done so—they are too closely acquainted and connected with those whom I believe most inimical to me—& it w^d be *echoed* to y^e *other* side by some means or other—I am not ashamed of what I do—as I feel my motive—I think my dear A—*one* of the worst misfortunes to be dreaded is that he will be *clawed* hold of by that *most detestable* Woman—your relation by Marriage [1]—I am sorry but I can't disguise from you my horror of her—(which I can fully & satisfactorily explain) *over and above* that which *all* must feel who know *any*thing of her—God bless you dearest A—and pray write a line

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Indorsed

Copy of a letter to Augusta Leigh

a letter of which this is the *exact* copy was delivered to M^rs Leigh by Miss Atkinson at my request Dec^r. 29^th. 1819

T VILLIERS—

Kirkby [Thursday] Dec^r 23^rd [1819]

Dearest A—As you seem to apprehend some insecurity from the ordinary means of communication, and I think myself called upon to speak openly, I will request M^rs Villiers to deliver this letter to you herself—I shall mention to her the prospect of B's return, and leave you to consult her if you like to do so.—

On my own account, for my own sake individually, I am at present not very anxious—but for you, I feel the greatest solicitude, and I should reproach myself were I to shrink at this crisis from the declaration of any opinions by which you might be assisted to form your own determination.—

The reasons which a short time since induced you to

[1] [Lady Caroline Lamb.]

deliberate whether you ought to continue the correspondence, even with those restrictions which you so cautiously observe, have infinitely more weight in the question whether any personal intercourse is admissible. —I have, throughout our confidential communication, strongly pointed out to you the pernicious effects that must result from B's associating with you, unless the circumstances were wholly changed, and the proofs of his reformation unequivocal.—So far from there being any change of this kind, several of his letters and some which you received only 3 or 4 months ago, demonstrate that he has not relinquished his criminal *desires*, & I think I may add designs. Is it not inevitable that the former must be more excited by the presence of their object, even though the latter, in consequence of your conduct, be frustrated ?—Guilt of *heart* must be promoted. It can scarcely be doubted, from the whole series of his correspondence, that you are his principal object in England.—Consider too, as a Mother, that he would corrupt the morals of your Children—and recollect that the impression on the public mind is such, that the strongest suspicion would attach to your personal intercourse with him—

Since evils of such magnitude may be confidently anticipated from one course, let us weigh the consequences of the alternative, (which in principle is unobjectionable)—that is—of your communicating to him your determination not to associate with him in the existing circumstances.—His revenge must be directed either against your *reputation* or your *pecuniary interests*. I do not think that his worst attacks upon the former, when appearing to proceed from pique, would endanger it more than your personal intercourse—particularly whilst he obviously desires to bring you under his power by any means,—& you cannot suppose that the conduct which principle would dictate on your part, were you & he together, would incline him to forbear—With regard to your pecuniary interests, of which he so insultingly reminds you, as if you were to be bribed into wickedness,

I am aware that the interests of your children [1] may *rightly* influence your conduct, when guilt is not incurred by consulting them—However your children cannot, I trust, under any circumstances be left destitute, for reasons which I will hereafter communicate.

Observe, I entreat you, that my sole wish is to place before you those considerations which appear to me most important, not to influence you by my authority or my wishes to adopt any course of the rectitude & propriety of which your own mind is not *thoroughly* convinced. I should most seriously regret so to influence you—for you would not act consistently, unless you acted from *Conviction*,—You would take half-measures, which must end in your ruin.—Anxious as I feel to support & comfort you in the recovered path of virtue, I could not hope to do so by an attempt to impose my own opinions—On the contrary I would as far as possible, remove every obstacle to independence of conduct on your part.

Consider then for yourself, whether it would be advisable to apprize him at Calais of the impossibility of your consenting to personal intercourse, after the letters which you had at different times received from him, &c.—and which had caused you to hesitate as to the propriety of continuing the correspondence—But, as I have before observed, I fully participate in your wish to consult his welfare in the present & the future, & should most warmly concur with you in any measures directed to those ends—

God bless you—& believe me
Ever affectionately yours
A I B

P.S. I think I cannot make it too clear to you that I do not *instigate* the measure which I suggest—If *my* reasons convince you, they become *yours*—if not, I have no wish to enforce them—

[1 Lord Byron was known to have made his will in favour of Mrs. Leigh and her children.]

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

The
Lady Byron
Kirkby Mallory
Hinckley
E O [Excise Office] Leicestershire
Tuesday Night [December 29, 1819]

My dearest A—Y^r letter—thro M^rs V arrived today—her Governess brought it me—as she herself is not likely to be in Town for sometime—Altho' y^e change of circumstances makes the advice *now* unnecessary—the impression of your kindness remains—& ever will remain the same on my heart—I have not words to thank you—but I do hope that I *do* not *may* not appear ungrateful in y^r Eyes—The time may come when y^e same kind solicitude may be excited for me—& I can't dearest A—help replying to your suggestions—Do you remember once before giving them & I told you, what I must again repeat & recall to you—that supposing me to feel like you on all the points you have touched—there is *one* which surely escaped you—supposing me to decide on not seeing him—what reasons could I give for it to my relations—friends—acquaintances but—*most of all* my Husband—I really cannot calculate *all* the consequences of that step as far as he is concerned—I think you agreed with me before—that this consideration rendered the step *impossible*—I assure you—all that you have said had passed already in my mind—My idea was this—if what you apprehend, came to pass, my conduct must have been—either this must cease—or our intercourse—& then had the latter been adopted—his caprice is so well known it (the estrangement) w^d not have been thought so extraordinary as in the other case—at *any* rate the intercourse to have been as much restricted as possible—I am sure—at least I hope—you cannot think it could have afforded me any pleasure—& for my children I most perfectly agree with you it w^d have been the least desirable upon earth—However I will honestly confess to you—I never have—I cannot now believe as you do in

the *depth* & *strength* of what is manifested by fits & starts—when there is nothing else—surely it must be a dreadful idea that he *must* necessarily be wicked in *some* way—then dearest A—I do not feel that I could *without one effort* relinquish—the hope—the chance of making some impression on his better feelings—you will perhaps think me foolish—vain—I hope not the latter—but indeed do you think there is one person in Eng^{d} who would—who *could* say to him what from circumstances *I* might ? it might be *lost now* but perhaps recur hereafter, & it w^{d} be a satisfaction to me at all events to have said it—Do you mean on the subject of pecuniary interests—what was said *of my opinion* expressed on the subject of the Mortgage—I mean to decline that wholly—& pray do me the justice to believe that one thought of the interests of my Children as far as *that* Channel is concerned never crosses my mind—I have only entreated—I believe more than once that y^{e} Will might be altered—but if it is not—as far as I understand the matter—there is not the slightest probability of their ever deriving any benefit—Whatever my feelings dear A—I assure you never in my life have I looked to advantages of *that* sort—I do not mean that I have any merit in not doing it—but that I have no inclination—therefore nothing to struggle with—I trust my Babes to Providence & provided they are *good*—I think perhaps *too little* of the rest—from indolence I daresay & fear——

I am sure you will not be angry with me for saying all I do & have & I only entreat you to reply to me—for very likely I may be wrong—but I have God knows ! considered & reflected on probabilities since I have had this dreadful expectation—What a mercy it has ceased ! My dear A do not you think it all *very odd ?*—I have not had any letter but besides the message I enclosed you yesterday one thro' D. K. this Evg to y^{e} same effect—my own opinion is he will *never* come—or at least *if ever*—not for this long time—if his life is spared—I will not tire you—with more now—Pray do not hate me for what I have written & do answer me—for I scarcely ever feel

confidence in my own opinions. God bless you—& thank you my dearest A for *all your great kindness*—Believe me always grateful——

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Kirkby [Friday] Dec^r 31^st [1819]

Dearest A—As I think the return, if it takes place, is likely to be sudden, and for that reason to preclude deliberation, it is certainly better that we should openly discuss the subject, previously, tho but for your request, I should have been reluctant on your account to resume it.

I was aware that in the letter sent through M^rs Villiers, I recapitulated some arguments which I had before urged to you, but I wished to present a full view of the case—You were mistaken, dear A—in supposing that I ever admitted the validity of any reasons in favor of *personal* intercourse, tho' I was persuaded that you might be justified in not breaking off the correspondence—However it is well that you have enabled me to correct that error—I will distinctly consider your reasons for thinking that it would be "impossible" for you to decline seeing B—you state them to be these—

"1^st that you could not allege any satisfactory reason for that conduct—To this I reply that since the publication of Manfred & Don Juan and the greater notoriety of their author's character, consideration for the good of your children would be deemed a sufficient justification by those whose opinions have most weight in society—and I should think that Col: Leigh might be persuaded of this by others, if not entirely by yourself.

2^ndly You still retain the hope of influencing him beneficially—What is the foundation for this hope?—Has it not been during the period of your associating with him that he has acted in a manner the most contrary, surely, to your views of what is for his welfare? Do not take upon yourself the responsibility of asserting that you have influence over him—The answer would be "How has it been used"?—I am very far from wishing to detach you from him in any way by which he could

be injured—It is under the existing circumstances that I foresee nothing but evil to both from your being with him—but were he to renounce his vicious habits and give evidence of a better state of mind, it would afford me consolation to know that you were confirming his amendment, in person or otherwise—

3rdly You may say you "cannot believe in the *depth* & *strength*" of his wicked dispositions towards you "when there is nothing else"—Do you mean nothing else to prove them but his occasional letters? Is *experience* nothing? Did you not before indulge the delusion that he was not in earnest till it was fatally proved that he was?—"Angry with you" dear A—No—my feelings are very different—I deeply lament to think that you are still too much influenced by *early* prepossessions and by hopes which to me appear totally unfounded, and likely to lead into danger—I have no suspicions of your being actuated by mercenary views, but I think you *ought not* to reject, without good reason, any advantages offered to your children—

I do not consider you bound to me in any way. I told you what I knew, because I thought that measure would enable me to befriend you—and chiefly by representing the objections to a renewal of personal communication between you & him—On reference to the letters which you returned to me, and to some other memorandums, I find that I have taken every opportunity of doing this—& you have never before made your dissent intelligible to me—with such objects in view, I considered myself justified in departing from my declaration made when I told you my knowledge of former guilt that our intercourse must be limited.[1]—We must, *according to your present intentions* act independently of each other. On my part it will still be with every possible consideration for you & your children—and should I by your reception of him be obliged to relinquish my intercourse with you, I will do so in such manner as shall be least prejudicial

[1] In the first draft of the letter the next sentence began: "If he returns, we must," etc.

to your interests.—I shall most earnestly wish that the results of your conduct may tend to establish your peace instead of aggravating your remorse—but, entertaining these views of your duty & my own, could I in honesty or in friendship suppress them—?—

Ever yours affectionately
A I B.

Pray write to me at M^r Carr's,
Frognall,
Hampstead.

to let me know that you have received this letter and what your impressions are—I may have failed in expressing my deep interest in your happiness, but I trust that you will believe it.

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

The 2^d Post Wed^y Evening
Lady Byron,
——Carr's Esq^re
Frognall
Hampstead

My dearest A,

I write a line to say that I received your letters safe—& as I hope to see you soon, I prefer replying to them *de vive voix*—

God bless you
Ever y^r most affec^te
A L

Tuesday Night [January 4, 1820]

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

The
Lady Byron
Kirkby Mallory
F H D Hinckley

Sunday [January 16, 1820]

My dearest A

Thanks—for writing—as I was anxious to hear of your safety & y^r cold—y^e latter you do not mention

You will have received a letter & enclosure from me—but I can't resist writing again a few lines—as altho' I am now well, delays are dangerous—& I wish to say dearest A—what a grief it is to me that I cannot *implicitly* adopt your advice—taking one—(& a very essential one it is) view of the subject, I am entirely of your opinion—but there are other points I *must* consider & unless I could change characters & circumstances, I do not see how I could act as for the sake of that *one*, I w^{d}—I trust I may be spared the trial—I scarcely know any greater that could befall me Pray tell me what you think of the letter I sent you—I have not yet written since the communication of the intended arrival & the change of intention have reached me—but I fear I must soon & wish I knew what to say, & whether it w^{d} give an opportunity of saying anything to be of use—tell me your ideas upon this—

I am glad you found Ada well & good—Do tell me for I had not time to ask you any thing—do *you* & *yours* still think of the Hampstead plan ?—

George B. was much vexed at not seeing you—He went away Monday—I must say Good Night & God bless you dearest A—& pray write soon to your ever affec^{te} & grateful

A L

Chicks : pretty well

The preceding letters were very unsatisfactory to Lady Byron, who wrote to Mrs. Villiers (January 26th, 1820) :

" I am reluctant to give you *my* impression of what has passed between Augusta and me respecting her conduct in case of his return—but I should like to know whether your unbiassed opinion formed from the statement of facts coincided with it."

After this time there was much less concert between the two. They remained friends till 1829, when Mrs. Leigh would have insisted on nominating a trustee to

the Marriage Settlement in substitution for Kinnaird. But long before that date Mrs. Leigh had more than once defied Lady Byron's wishes and advice, especially in starting a violent quarrel with Captain Lord Byron. But the period of Mrs. Leigh's estrangement from Lady Byron and of many windings and deviations from sense and reason belongs not to this place. Enough to say, that the disasters of Mrs. Leigh's later years were partly caused and greatly aggravated by her complete subjection to impulse and temper.

CHAPTER V

SOME CORRESPONDENCE OF ANNE ISABELLA BYRON

"Perhaps not a pleasant spectacle,—said Glenalmond.—And yet, do you know, I think somehow a great one."—*Weir of Hermiston.*

AFTER the letter of Easter Sunday, 1816, Lord Byron wrote only once more to Lady Byron for three years. On November 1st, 1816, he wrote to her from Milan; after that never again till August, 1819. The third letter he wrote to her from abroad was from Ravenna, December 31st, 1819. The only part of it that need be quoted here is his offer of an inspection of the first part of the Memoirs.

"Augusta can tell you all about me & mine if you think either worth the enquiry;——But the object of my writing is to come————

"It is this.—I saw Moore three months ago and gave to his care—a long Memoir written up to the Summer of 1816, of my life—which I had been writing since I left England.—It will not be published till after my death—and in fact it is a 'Memoir' and not 'confessions' I have omitted the most important & decisive events and passions of my existence not to compromise otherss.—But it is not so with the part you occupy—which is long and minute—and I could wish you to see, read—and mark any part or parts that do not appear to coincide with the truth.—The truth I have always stated—but there are two ways of looking at it—and your way may be not mine.—I have never revised the paperss since they were written—You may read them—and mark what you

please—I wish you [to] know what I think and say of you & yourss.—You will find nothing to flatter you—nothing to lead you to the most remote suppossition that we could ever have been—or be happy together.—But I do not choosse to give to another generation statements which we cannot arise from the dust to prove or disprove—without letting you see fairly & fully what I look upon you to have been—and what I depict you as being.—If seeing this—you can detect what is false—or answer what is charged—do so—*your mark* —shall not be erased.— — —

"You will perhaps say *why* write my life?—Alas! I say so too—but they who have traduced it—& blasted it—and branded me—should know—that it is they—and not I—are the cause—It is no great pleasure to have lived—and less to live over again the details of existence—but the last becomes sometimes a necessity and even a duty.—

"If you choosse to see this you may—if you do not—you have at least had the option" [1]

[Finished] January 1st—[1820].

Lady Byron received this letter at Kirkby Mallory about or a little before January 21st, 1820. Her first impulse was to answer it, and she drew up the following draft:

"I have received your letter of January 1st offering to my perusal a Memoir of your life and informing me that the part which I occupy is 'long and minute.'—

"I decline to inspect it because I consider the composition of such a Memoir for present or future circulation as wholly unjustifiable, and I would not, even indirectly, appear to sanction it.

[1] The signature is a whirl of curves in the fashion of Mrs. Leigh's signature, in her letter to Lord Byron of December 14th, 1814, a facsimile of which will be found at p. 38. [See also p. 286 for Byron's signature.]

The frequent duplication of the letter *s* is a characteristic of Lord Byron's writing during the last five years of his life. There is not a trace of this orthographic peculiarity in his earlier manuscripts.

"If you truly state our domestic circumstances I can only express my astonishment that *you* should wish to expose them.—If as I have every reason to expect, your representation is partial, falsely coloured, and affectedly candid, the mode of refutation which you suggest would be very inadequate.—

"I have most earnestly desired, and especially on our daughter's account, that our private concerns should no further be obtruded on the public—I would have submitted to some injustice from opinion, rather than have promoted or renewed the discussion of so painful a topic.—Of this I believe you were well aware—But there must be a limit to forbearance, and that limit is fixed, absolutely fixed, in my own mind.—

"Great as is the advantage which your talents give you, I feel confident that your duplicity, with the facts and feelings which it is employed to conceal, will ultimately be discovered—and that every addition which you make to the fabric of falsehood will accelerate its fall.—

"When I last addressed you I was still influenced by an attachment too deep to be rapidly subdued however unjustly and cruelly treated—I now most sincerely wish your welfare, and shall lament any proceedings on your part which may render it impossible for me to persevere in a passive conduct."

Colonel Doyle thought this letter—which was never sent—a very good one, with the exception perhaps of the last paragraph but one. He thought it also questionable whether the last paragraph meant anything, and considered it would be better left out.

But Dr. Lushington thought it very objectionable for Lady Byron to enter into a direct correspondence on that subject with Lord Byron. He thought there was not a shadow of doubt—and in this all agreed—that she should decline any perusal of the manuscript or Memoir, but he thought the communication should be made through Mrs. Leigh.

Colonel Doyle wrote to Lady Byron (January 27th, 1820):

"[Dr. Lushington] conceives that if it were made to appear to Mrs. Leigh that the consequence of this sort of controversy, begun by the circulation of a Memoir, followed by an answer, and ending in publication on both sides would inevitably be at last the disclosure of everything which she was most desirous to conceal—that such a letter or communication from her to him would be sent as would be as likely to operate in deterring him from the commencement of this attack as any other means you could employ. This would depend upon her communicating to him pretty faithfully what you should write to her. Lushington seems to think there would be no doubt of this. . . .

"I think the great point to effect is that Lord Byron should be *aware* of the *extent* of the *information* you possess, and be made to believe that the consequence of commencing an attack which would lead necessarily from one thing to another, would be the ultimate disclosure of everything. If this could be done through Mrs. Leigh it perhaps would be the best course, and you can best judge of that. . . .

"If you think that you can make Mrs. Leigh the instrument of conveying that sort of intimidation to Lord Byron that may deter him from the course he is about to enter—I think you should not be prevented by any consideration for her *immediate feelings* on receiving a decided letter from you on the subject—as, to her as well as to all concerned—it is of so much more importance that things should be left undisturbed—than that present feelings only should be consulted."

Dr. Lushington sketched an outline for a letter from Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh. His first idea was to convey a sort of threat to make a full and unreserved disclosure to the world of all those circumstances which would at once establish Lady Byron's justification, "and involve Lord Byron and others in infamy."

Dr. Lushington suggested also the following words :

" Lord Byron is probably by no means aware of the extent of the information of which I was possessed before our separation, nor of the additional proofs as well as new facts which have since come to my knowledge."

However, after these and other suggestions, Dr. Lushington concluded thus in a letter to Colonel Doyle of January 25th, 1820 :

" Indeed I doubt whether the safest and wisest course would not be, shortly to request Mrs. Leigh to communicate to Lord Byron Lady Byron's refusal to inspect the Memoirs, and add as it were cursorily

" ' If they should come into circulation in my lifetime I should lament on account of others the disclosures which I should then be compelled to make in my own justification—for my daughter I should regret publicity : to myself it could not be injurious.' "

Lady Byron wrote to Colonel Doyle from Kirkby, January 29th, 1820 :

" I defer to Dr. Lushington's opinion with respect to the danger of entering into a direct correspondence with Lord Byron—I will state my objections to the measure which he proposes to substitute

" 1st. I think it is highly desirable that I should be able to produce to any one a copy of my declaration to Lord B— on this subject—If that declaration were contained in a letter to Mrs Leigh, I must, in showing it, either explain fully how she and I are circumstanced, or else inferences contrary to the truth would be drawn from the fact of my treating her thus confidentially.—

" 2ndly. Supposing that objection could be obviated—Mrs L— *is* herself sufficiently alarmed about the consequences of his measures, but I have no reason to think that she can influence him.—I foresee from the

transmission of such a letter in substance as D^r L's *first* (which I believe she would transmit, if urged to do so—*with her own comments*), this consequence :—that, an unreserved disclosure from her to him being necessitated, they would combine together against me—he being actuated by revenge—she by fear—whereas, from her never having dared to inform him that she has already admitted his guilt to me with her own, they have hitherto been prevented from acting in concert—The transmission of the cursory observation suggested in D^r L's *note*, and the equivalent of what I *have* said to her, would not in my opinion have any effect. Lord B— is not intimidated by terms so general. The addition which you suggest of the paragraph—' *Lord B— is probably by no means aware of the extent of the information of which I was possessed before our separation*, nor of the additional proofs, as well as new facts, which have since come to my knowledge '—would render the communication more pointed (bringing it perhaps into the same case with the *first*) but I perceive objections to the clause underlined. For, my information previous to my separation having been derived either directly from Lord B— or from my observations on that part of his conduct which he exposed to my view—the expression ' he is probably not aware ' would seem a contradiction, at least unless guarded by something to this effect—' As the infatuation of pride may have blinded him to the conclusions which must inevitably be established by a long series of circumstantial evidences '—The same clause also appears objectionable to me as coinciding with the story of my having used clandestine means to obtain information—An invention doubtless designed to invalidate the force, or impair the respectability of my probable statements—on the same principle as he contrived to cast on Lady C L[1]— the suspicion of a forgery in order to destroy the effect of her evidence against him.—These insidious endeavours render it in my opinion the more necessary for me to have made my

[1] [Lady Caroline Lamb.]

protest,—in terms of greater decision than I have yet employed, and in such a form as to be recorded,—before an attack is made upon the credibility of my testimony.—And in one case, which it is painful to me to calculate upon, such a declaration would be almost the sole, though inadequate proof of my conscious integrity—viz—If I were to survive him—for it would then be impossible for me to vindicate myself *by accusation* from the posthumous charges which could not, probably, be otherwise disproved.—

* * *

" I have to ask—would not such a communication to Lord B— from my father—authorised by me—answer the desired ends without being liable to the same objections as a letter from myself—

" The chief points in that communication to be—

" The information of my declining to peruse the MS—A representation of the injurious consequences of its circulation to Ada—and a declaration that I shall consider the existence of such a Memoir (avowedly destined for future publication) especially if it be circulated in MS—at present, as releasing me from even the shadow of an engagement to suppress the facts of my own experience, or the corroborating proofs of Lord B's character & conduct—that reluctant as I have ever been to bring my domestic concerns before the public, and anxious as I have felt to save from ruin a near connection of his, I shall feel myself compelled by duties of primary importance, if he perseveres in accumulating injuries upon me, to make a disclosure of the past in the *most* authentic form.—

" The last sentence requires very great caution—& I have only given the substance.—*This* allusion to M^rs^ L— is not so likely as that which she might convey, to necessitate her acknowledgment to him. At the same time it would have equal force.—I do not conceive that such a communication would absolutely bind me at this time to publish my case, if he should, (relying on the

advantage of an intervening sea,) return an answer of defiance.—"

Colonel Doyle answered, February 1st [?] 1820:

"I shall send your memorandum to Lushington & not answer it till I get his answer & have seen him. I will however say that it is *my* present impression that as you will not transmit your protest through M^rs L. for the very fair reason you assign—a letter from yourself short & to the point, without any unnecessary provocation—but intimating the determination not to yield beyond a certain point—as in y^r first letter you have expressed, w^d be better than through y^r father—the threat of a third person may make it incumbent upon his pride to revolt—"

After much discussion, Dr. Lushington's objection to Lady Byron writing herself for fear of its leading to correspondence was decided to be inapplicable to a proper letter, the terms of which were arranged, but only after considerable delay.

Lady Byron to Lord Byron.[1]

Kirkby Mallory
March 10th 1820

I received your letter of January 1^st offering to my perusal a Memoir of part of your life. I decline to inspect it. I consider the publication or circulation of such a composition at any time as prejudicial to Ada's future happiness. For my own sake I have no reason to shrink from publicity, but notwithstanding the injuries which I have suffered, I should lament some of the *consequences*.

A I: Byron.

To Lord Byron.

[1] This and the following letter were printed in 1853 with Moore's Diaries, without any kind of sanction from Lady Byron, but, though feeling that it was improper to publish them without her leave, she did not regret that her reason for avoiding public discussion, viz., her daughter's happiness, should become known. In 1853 that reason no longer existed.

LORD BYRON TO LADY BYRON.

To
The Lady Byron
to the care of Mr T. Moore
Inclosed in a wrapper by Thomas Moore and addressed
For
The Lady Byron
Kirkby Mallory (redirected 10, York Buildings, Hastings)
T. M.

Ravenna. April 3d 1820.

I received yesterday your answer dated March 10th. My offer was an honest one, and surely could be only construed as such even by the most malignant Casuistry —I *could* answer you—but it is too late, and it is not worth while—

To the mysterious menace of the last sentence—whatever its import may be—and I really cannot pretend to unriddle it—I could hardly be very sensible even if I understood it—before it could take place—I shall be where "nothing can touch him further."—I advise you however to anticipate the period of your intention—for be assured no power of yourss can avail beyond the present,—and if it could I would answer with the Florentine

"Et io, che possto son con loro in croce
. . . . . e certo
La *fiera Moglie*, piu ch'altro, mi nuoce."

BYRON.

To,
Lady Byron.

In the course of the same year, 1820, Lord Byron wrote several times to Lady Byron, constantly repeating the request originally made in the letter of Easter Sunday, 1816, for future kindness to Augusta. The inconsistency of alternate supplications and imprecations is one of the most extraordinary manifestations of Lord Byron's complex or twofold character. After writing an entreaty

on October 8th, 1820, to one of the two A.'s,[1] he wrote (about October 20th, 1820) to the other A. :

" — the Lady Byron I suppose retains her old starch obstinacy—with a deeper dash of Sternness—from the dint of time—and the effort it has cost her to be ' magnanimous ' as they called her mischief-making.— . . .

" Time and Events will one or the other revenge her past conduct,—without any interference of mine.—"

His renewed appeals—half entreaty, half curse—were in the spirit of those supplications of old which, though lame, haggard and looking nowhere, were the children of the Eternal, and, when spurned and denied by the infatuation of men, sooner or later surely invoked final equity that the avenger may follow.

> καὶ γάρ τε Λιταί εἰσι Διὸς κοῦραι μεγάλοιο,
> χωλαί τε ῥυσαί τε παραβλῶπές τ' ὀφθαλμώ,
> αἵ ῥά τε καὶ μετόπισθ' Ἄτης ἀλέγουσι κιοῦσαι.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ὃς δέ κ' ἀνήνηται καί τε στερεῶς ἀποείπῃ,
> λίσσονται δ' ἄρα ταί γε Δία Κρονίωνα κιοῦσαι
> τῷ Ἄτην ἅμ' ἕπεσθαι, ἵνα βλαφθεὶς ἀποτίσῃ.
>
> "Iliad," IX., 502, etc

With all her inflexibility, Lady Byron was not insensible to pity for the destructive consequences of that passion which had broken up Lord Byron's life. She felt that he was suffering from irremediable sorrow, which no power could remit. But after so many prayers from him on this one subject, she was moved to write once more to him for the very last time. Her note was very short, and is here given *verbatim :*

LADY BYRON TO LORD BYRON.

Indorsed : " *Copy to Lord B.*"

Kirkby
Dec^er^ 10^th^ 1820

When you first expressed the wish respecting M^rs^ Leigh, which is repeated in your last letter of Oct^tr^ 8^th^ I deter-

[1] In 1814 Lord Byron used to talk to Lady Melbourne of her niece Anne Isabella Milbanke as " your A," of Augusta Leigh as " my A "—and sometimes referred to " the two A's."

mined to act consistently with it. If the assurance of that intention would conduce,—(as you state in a former letter, & as appears from your reiterated requests)—to calm your mind, I will not withhold it. The past shall not prevent me from befriending Augusta Leigh & her Children in any future circumstances which may call for my assistance—I promise to do so.—She knows nothing of this——

Lord Byron to Lady Byron.

To
The Right Hon^ble
Lady Byron.
(Sealed with the pansy seal—motto
" elle vous suit partout.")

" Ravenna. [Thursday] 10^bre 28^th 1820.

I acknowledge your note which is on the whole satisfactory—the style a little harssh—but that was to be expected—it would have been too great a peace-offering after nearly five yearss—to have been gracious in the manner, as well as in the matter.—Yet you might have been sso—for communications between *us*—are like " Dialogues of the Dead "—or " letterss between this world & the next." You have alluded to the " *past* " and I to the future.—As to Augusta—she knowss as little of my request, as of your answer—Whatever She is or may have been—*you* have never had reason to complain of her—on the contrary—you are not aware of the obligations under which you have been to her.—Her life & mine—and yourss & mine—were two things perfectly distinct from each other—when one ceased the other began—and now both are clossed.

You must be aware of the reasons of my request in fa^r of Augusta & her Child^n which are the restrictions I am under by the Settlement, which death would make yourss—at least the available portion.

I wrote to you on the 8^th or ninth inst, I think.—Things here are fast coming to a Crisis.— — — War may

be considered as nearly inevitable—though the King of N is gone to Congress,[1] that will scarcely hinder it—the people are so excited, you must not mind what the English fools say of Italy—they know nothing—they go gaping from Rome to Florence and so on—which is like seeing England—in Saint James's Street.— — —

I live with the people and amongsst them—& know them—and you may rely upon my not deceiving you, though I may myself If you mean ever to extricate the Settlement from the funds now is the time to make the trustees act—while Stocks are yet up—and peace not actually broken. Pray attend to this—

Yours
Byron

P.S.

Excuse haste—I have scribbled in great quickness,—and do not attribute it to ill-humour—but to matterss which are on hand—& which must be attended to—I am really obliged by your attention to my request. — — — You could not have sent me any thing half so acceptable but I have *burnt* your note that you may be under no restraint but your internal feeling.—It is a comfort to me *now*—beyond all comforts ; that A— & her children will be thought of—after I am nothing ; but five yearss ago—it would have been something more ? why did you *then keep silence ?* I told you that I was going *long*—and going *far* (not so *far* as I intended—for I meant to have gone to Turkey and am not sure that I shall not finish with it—but *longer* than I meant to have made of existence—at least at that time—) and two words about her or herss would have been to me—like vengeance or freedom to an Italian—i.e. the 'Ne plus ultra' of gratifications—She and two otherss were the only things

[1] The King of Naples escaped from his capital and "National Parliament" on December 13th, 1820, on board an English man-of-war, the "Vengeur," was landed at Leghorn and went on to Laybach. After the Congress, an Austrian army marched to put an end to the Neapolitan constitution, and before the end of March, 1821, the constitutional army concluded a slight resistance with unqualified submission (Sir Spencer Walpole's "History of England," chap. x.).

I ever really loved—I may say it now,—for we are young no longer.——"[1]

It is evident from the allusions in Lord Byron's letter of December 28th, 1820, that he had become thoroughly aware of the extent of Lady Byron's information, and did not wish that she should be misled. He probably may have heard from Augusta herself that she had admitted her own guilt together with his to Lady Byron.

The breath of pagan and sensuous melancholy which vibrated in Byron has little or no significance to the present age, and indeed is almost unintelligible without interpretation. Such an interpreter was Goethe, whose comprehensive genius mastered most of what co-existed in the long epoch of his life. Headlong progress has carried Europe ever farther from classical paganism. Semitic and socialist hordes are far more deadly to ancient learning and beauty than even the Christians to pagan Rome. Modern materialism decoys mankind with ugly but effective spectres, the craving for absolute utility, the madness of final equality, so-called universal happiness. The state in its wisdom keeps schools for Christianity without God, literature without Latin, science without conscience. We are remote indeed from the despair of the humanists over the substitution of the barbarous Old Testament for the Alexandrian Library.[2]

At the ruin of paganism, joy and beauty vanished from life, together with the motley throng of the gods of old

[1] There is a clever guess in the article in "Temple Bar" mentioned at pp. 143-4, note, and 161, about this last letter from Lady Byron to Lord Byron: "She sent him a parting letter which he destroyed. It is known only from being mentioned in one which he wrote (17th November, 1821) but did not send to her." "Her letter contained some voluntary pledge." "One of two reasons, neither perhaps the true one, which he gave her, for having destroyed it, is that he wished to take her word without documents." "He alleged as the other reason for the destruction of her letter that it was written in a style not very agreeable. It is probable she told him that it would be, as it was, the last letter he would receive from her." "He would not dare preserve such a letter, which must needs allude to the cause of separation" ("Temple Bar").

The writer, however, obviously made the mistake of assuming that Lady Byron's letter of December 10th, 1820, had been written in 1816.

[2] Gladstone gave his "Romanes lecture" "to combat Pattison's statement that the extinction of the Pagan civilization by the Church was a great calamity" ("Talks with Mr. Gladstone, by the Hon. L. A. Tollemache," p. 107).

and their rites and revels. Droning preachers vainly muttered their empty benedictions. Black fanaticism snatched human victims from life and love.

> " saepius illa
> religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta." [1]

The dark transformation of the world is described in an exquisite poem of Goethe. In it a fair heathen bride is offered up to the dread alien Deity to whom her baptised and Christian parents have devoted her,

> " tremibundaque ad aras
> deductast, non ut solemni more sacrorum
> perfecto posset claro comitari Hymenaeo
> sed casta inceste nubendi tempore in ipso
> hostia concideret mactatu maesta parentis
> exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur
> tantum religio potuit suadere malorum." [2]

But neither earth nor the exorcisms of priests can cool love. Her apparition, white as snow, but cold as ice, visits the lover to whom she had been promised while yet the bright temple of Venus was standing. He vows to warm and win her back to love and joy though she came from the grave itself. But she warns him she belongs not to joy, no heart beats in her breast. She must not stay with him, but he must follow her.

In her last adjuration, we could almost think we hear that final farewell which should be inscribed on the urn that ought to hold Byron's ashes :

> " Einen scheiterhaufen schichte du ;
> Oeffne meine bange kleine hütte,
> Bring' in flammen liebende zur ruh.'
> Wenn der funke sprüht,
> Wenn die asche glüht,
> Eilen wir den alten göttern zu." [3]

" Ainsi mourut cet homme qui fut sans doute un grand coupable, mais qui pourtant fut un homme." [4]

[1] Lucretius, I. 82.
[2] Lucretius, I. 95–101.
[3] " Die Braut von Corinth."
[4] " Monsieur de Camors."

CHAPTER VI

LADY BYRON'S POLICY OF SILENCE

"I looked at the face of the crucifix, and . . . some sense of what the thing implied was carried home to my intelligence. The face looked down upon me with a painful and deadly contraction; but the rays of a glory encircled it, and reminded me that the sacrifice was voluntary. It stood there, crowning the rock, as it still stands on so many highway sides, vainly preaching to passers-by, an emblem of sad and noble truths: that pleasure is not an end, but an accident; that pain is the choice of the magnanimous; that it is best to suffer all things and do well."—R. L. Stevenson, *Olalla*.

"Poets are not ideal beings; but have their prose-sides, like the commonest of the people. We often hear persons say, What they would have given to have seen Shakespeare! For my part, I would give a great deal not to have seen him; at least if he was at all like anybody else that I have ever seen. . . . It is always fortunate for ourselves and others, when we are prevented from exchanging admiration for knowledge. The splendid vision that in youth haunts our idea of the poetical character, fades, upon acquaintance, into the light of common day; as the azure tints that deck the mountains' brow are lost on a nearer approach to them. It is well, according to the moral of one of the Lyrical Ballads,—'To leave Yarrow unvisited.'"—Hazlitt, *Lecture on Living Poets*.

LORD BYRON'S life contained nothing of any interest except what ought not to have been told. His story was not his alone. Other fates had been engulfed in his—fates of which no account was owing to the public. The poignant drama of the separation: "so poetical in its circumstances, and the mystery in which it was involved—that if he had invented it, he could hardly have had a more fortunate subject for his genius"[1]

[1] Goethe in conversation with George Ticknor, October 25th, 1816.

—could not be put into simple prose " sine ira et studio." Those sad transactions had left a sting in every heart and memory, but a still stronger craving for silence and rest. He alone was constantly on the verge—sometimes more than on the verge—of facing the world with defiant avowals ; of having a " Dies Irae " of his own, for the disclosure of secrets, and searching of hearts with fire ; of forcing his public to become absolutely his confidants. That public of contemporaries recoiled affrighted from the spectres he called half out of vagueness. They washed their hands of comprehension.

Their avidity for the poetry, once so stimulating to them, passed away. He had defied what they revered, and was expelled from the country. He was already dead to the nation which sent him into exile. The waters of oblivion divided him from England as completely as the sea over which he never returned. His fame had risen in other lands, and spread far and wide, but the English had had enough of his alien and rebel spirit—his " fierce and unfathomable thoughts," his " eternal wrath " :

> " And where he gazed a gloom pervaded space."

" Eternal wrath " had been his overthrow and extinction ; it availed not to give him a fierce immortality of posthumous greatness, which he had not himself expected, or indeed desired, when he should be " where nothing can touch him further." In England, at least, no more Byron was wanted, not even a supposititious one.

No spontaneous revival ever came, nothing but simulated praise, and disguised announcements of Byron ware for hire or purchase. Such unreal and passing fashions would have been once for all extinguished by the truth about Lord Byron. It would have been well to stamp out free trade in falsehood and restore silence to his memory. He would not have desired the survival of that deception which began in spite of him ; for it was he who first startled the world with " the night-mare of

his own delinquencies "[1] in "Manfred,"—his Apocalypse of defiance to the society which had renounced him, and he rather endured than consented to his avowals being explained away.

The alternate chaos and order of his mind did much to encourage the darkest suppositions of those who heard his conversation. He was in turn dominated by frenzy and master of his frenzy, able to direct it to a purpose. He had a fancy for some Oriental legends of pre-existence, and in his conversation and poetry took up the part of a fallen or exiled being, expelled from heaven, or sentenced to a new Avatar on earth for some crime, existing under a curse, predoomed to a fate really fixed by himself in his own mind, but which he seemed determined to fulfil. At times this dramatic imagination resembled a delusion; he would play at being mad, and gradually get more and more serious, as if he believed himself to be destined to wreck his own life and that of everyone near him. All this took a coherent literary form; there underlies his poems from the crude beginnings in "Hours of Idleness" to "Lara," and from "The Siege of Corinth" to "Heaven and Earth," the desire to terrify mankind and make them see

> "a dusk and awful figure rise
> Like an infernal god from out the earth,"[2]

but terror was in reality all-powerful with himself, though he added to the above: "But I do fear him not."

The part of prophet of Antichrist,[3] half in jest, half in madness, was assumed in his writings. The spirit of suffering and vengeance of the French Revolution was reflected in his formidable laughter and his mystery of lamentation. He was a sort of offspring of the revolu-

[1] "I was half mad (in June and July, 1816) between metaphysics, mountains, lakes, love unextinguishable, thoughts unutterable, and the night-mare of my own delinquencies. I should, many a good day, have blown my brains out, but for the recollection that it would have given pleasure to my mother-in-law; and even *then* if I could have been certain to haunt her" (Written January 28th, 1817, v. Moore's Quarto, ii. 72).

[2] "Manfred," Act III, Scene 4.

[3] Lamartine addressed him as "Chantre d'enfer!"

tionary convulsions in France in the years immediately following his birth. The passions which led him from his birth till he returned to the East to die were an incarnation of the romance, gaiety, energy, and cruelty of the French Revolution,—

> " tempting region *that*
> For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
> Where passions had the privilege to work,
> And never hear the sound of their own names."
>
> " A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise,
> The appointed seat of equitable law
> And mild paternal sway."

Byron, however, was at no time " a patriot of the world " or of any other place, and never dreamt dreams that one day the triumph of humanity and liberty would be complete, nor to say the truth did he very much care. He knew as well as any one that " for this purpose several things were necessary which are impossible. It is a consummation which cannot happen till the nature of things is changed, . . . till romantic generosity shall be as common as gross selfishness, . . . till the love of power and of change shall no longer goad men on to restless action, till passion and will, hope and fear, love and hatred, and the objects proper to excite them, that is, alternate good and evil, shall no longer sway the bosoms and businesses of men." [1] Byron was more sensible to the stupendous poetry of the relentless empire of force and heroes which in his time had almost mastered the world.

Men of judgment and authority, Lord John Russell, Lord Lansdowne, Canning and Hobhouse,[2] were unanimous that there ought to be no biography—he had been too great a reprobate,[3] that it was quite out of the question to enter into the details of Lord Byron's life,[4] that Lord Byron's letters could not be published by those

[1] Hazlitt on Mr. Wordsworth's poem, " The Excursion."
[2] Moore's Diary, v. 40, 41.
[3] *Ibid.*, v. 51.
[4] *Ibid.*, iv. 253.

to whom they were addressed confidentially.[1] That there was no excuse for cramming not over-willing contemporaries with Byron biography was also implied in Lord Holland's strong protest against an assignment [2] or pawning of the Byron Memoirs to a bookseller for ultimate publication. Lord Holland "seemed to think it was in cold blood depositing a sort of quiver of poisoned arrows for a future warfare on private character." This was on November 4th, 1821, and implied censure on Byron himself for his intention to bequeath his own story to the world when he should be gone.[3]

If publication of a life is ever legitimate, it must be that of an autobiography designed expressly for that end. Nevertheless, it would seem that Lord Byron did listen to the strong remonstrances made, and withdraw the authority for immediate publication of his Memoirs in the event of his death. Their destruction he never contemplated, and assuredly he would far sooner have committed to the flames most of the intolerable volumes issued about him from that day to this, together with their compilers and publishers.[4]

[1] Moore's Diary, v. 154.

[2] [Lord Byron had given his autograph memoirs to Thomas Moore, who had raised a loan of £2,000 on them from Mr. Murray.—Ed.]

[3] Moore's Diary, iii. 298.

[4] "During our ride the conversation turned on our mutual friends and acquaintances in England. Talking of two of them, for one of whom he professed a great regard, he declared laughingly that they had saved him from suicide. Seeing me look grave, he added: 'It is a fact, I assure you: I should positively have destroyed myself, but I guessed that ——— or ——— would write my life, and with this fear before my eyes, I have lived on. I know so well the sort of things they would write of me—the excuses, lame as myself, that they would offer for my delinquencies, while they were unnecessarily exposing them, and all this done with the avowed intention of justifying what, God help me! cannot be justified, my *unpoetical* reputation, with which the world can have nothing to do! One of my friends would dip his pen in clarified honey, and the other in vinegar, to describe my manifold transgressions, and as I do not wish my poor fame to be either *preserved* or *pickled*, I have lived on and written my Memoirs, where facts will speak for themselves, without the editorial candour of excuses, such as "we cannot excuse *this* unhappy error, or defend that impropriety!"—the mode,' continued Byron, 'in which friends exalt their own prudence and virtue, by exhibiting the want of those qualities in the dear departed, and by marking their disapproval of his errors. I have written my Memoirs,' said Byron, 'to save the necessity of their being written by a friend or friends, and have only to hope they will not add notes'" (Lady Blessington's "Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron" p. 56).

The Memoirs were burnt with indecent haste on the third morning from the arrival of the news of Lord Byron's death.

The pretended reason put forward was an allegation that the Memoirs were "of such a low, *Pot-house* description" [1] that they never could be published by a Church and King bookseller. Such was the assertion of the "foremost of literary prostitutes"—"one of the meanest specimens of the workmanship of God" [2]—the informer Gifford.[3] "Grown old in the service of corruption," [4] this "menial tool of noble families" [4] commonly reserved his rancour for those *low people* of whom he had originally been one himself. Once no flattery of the "Noble Bard" had been too fulsome for Keats's traducer.[5]

[1] These were the very words attributed to Gifford by Murray, first in conversation with Captain Lord Byron (March 15th, 1828), and repeated in a letter from the same Murray to Sir Robert Wilmot Horton (March 25th, 1830).

[2] "Adonais," p. 5. Shelley had "dipped his pen in consuming fire" to write these indelible words (Shelley Society facsimile, p. 15).

[3] "You are a little person, but a considerable cat's paw; and so far worthy of notice. Your clandestine connexion with persons high in office constantly influences your opinions, and alone gives importance to them. You are the *Government Critic*—a character nicely differing from that of a government spy—the invisible link that connects literature with the police. It is your business to keep a strict eye over all writers who differ in opinion with his Majesty's Ministers, and to measure their talents and attainments by the standard of their servility and meanness" (Hazlitt's letter to William Gifford, Esq.).

[4] Hazlitt's letter to William Gifford, Esq.

[5] "From the difficulty Gifford had in constructing a sentence of common grammar, and his frequent failures," his ignominious defamation, like his venal good nature, was sometimes committed to a colleague, or even a comparatively respectable man, for execution. He was one of those persons who "cannot write a whole work themselves, but they take care that the whole is such as they might have written; it is to have the Editor's mark, like the broad R on every page . . . nothing is to be differently conceived or better expressed than the Editor could have done it" (Sketches, etc., by Hazlitt, 1839, p. 353). It has been suggested that Editor Gifford employed Croker on the vile article about Keats, but it is not very material whether those turpitudes were partly Croker's or wholly Gifford's.

"Lame G.," as Hazlitt named this sinister figure, was "in no danger of exciting the jealousy of his patrons by a mortifying display of extraordinary talents." "A happy combination of defects, natural and acquired," "at once ensured the gratitude and contempt" of those who "presided over the impure expedients of the state." Amongst other shameful functions, he was Commissioner in the Lottery Office. The one honest thing about him was his aversion to genius and beauty. "He damns a beautiful expression less out of spite than because he really does not understand it. Any novelty of thought or sentiment gives him a shock from which he cannot recover for some time, and

The "Quarterly Review" of February, 1817, "wrote Byron *down a beauty*, borrowing the description of his charms from Glenarvon!!!" "This precious piece of impudence" [1] was attributed to Walter Scott, "who, amiable, frank, friendly, manly in private life,"—"joined a gang of desperadoes to spread calumny, contempt, infamy, wherever they were merited by honesty or talent on a different side—who officiously undertook to decide public questions by private insinuations, to prop the throne by nicknames, and the altar by lies—who being (by common consent) the finest, the most humane and accomplished writer of his age, associated himself with and encouraged the lowest panders of a venal press." [2]

The article was in no real sense Scott's own, being entirely inspired by "Gifford, Murray and Co." [3]

he naturally takes his revenge for the alarm and uneasiness occasioned him, without reference to venal or party motives" ("Spirit of the Age," and letter to "William Gifford Esq^e").

In an unpublished letter, J. C. Hobhouse wrote that Gifford began his career "as a voluntary reformer, self-sworn upon his own altar to make war upon the giant vices of the age, and be at the least himself an honest man"—and that he had concluded "as the pimp and pander of the Court."

[1] Robert John Wilmot to Lady Byron, February 20th, 1817.

[2] Hazlitt's "Spirit of the Age," pp. 154, 155.

"The beginning of the nineteenth century saw bands of literary ruffians marshalled in order for each of the two parties in politics, and prepared to shoot down, scatter and trample upon all who presumed to hold other views of politics or religion than their own. The Quarterly and Edinburgh Reviews, in the first decades of the century, were, to the authors of the period, very much what the scalping Indian tribes of Sioux or Choctaws were to the New England settlers" (Miss Frances Power Cobbe on *Schadenfreude* or *ἐπιχαιρεκακία* in the "Contemporary Review," May, 1902).

According to Hazlitt—scalper of scalpers—the crimes of the "Edinburgh Review" were exclusively literary. It ridiculed the "Lyrical Ballads," and denied their beauties, but did not "barb ridicule by some allusion (false or true) to private history." Jeffrey was not "impervious alike to truth and candour," and did not "traduce every opponent" ("Spirit of the Age," pp. 306, etc.).

[3] Robert John Wilmot to Lady Byron, February 20th, 1817.

The argument of the article attributed to Walter Scott was:

"That Lord Byron was not *quite* a Joseph, but that he *was* the soul of honour and generosity.

"That he never told even a white lie, nor made himself in any way whiter than he truly was. That he did think Lady Byron a little too good, and was in a passion, which frightened her, and her friends still worse—and then was rather too proud to beg pardon, which she was too much *affronted* to grant.

"That he showed a disregard of money which was foolish, to be sure, but

Gifford's insinuation against the Byron Memoirs was no more trustworthy than his former adulation of the autobiographer. There was nothing at all gross in the first part of the Memoirs, ending in the summer of 1816. In the latter portion there were at most four or five indelicate pages, which could have perfectly been spared. Lord John Russell, Lady Holland and other readers of the Memoirs agree about this.

It is absolutely untrue that the Memoirs were burnt for Lady Byron's sake or by her influence. She did not wish to destroy them, and had no motive whatever for their disappearance;—quite the reverse—had it depended on her. It was her interest to preserve and perpetuate all possible evidence.

One of the real reasons for the destruction of the MS. was a panic over possible revelations concerning another lady, whose feelings and interests were put forward as the paramount consideration by the parties to that deed. If its destruction was for anyone's interest, it was for hers. It is uncertain how far she was compromised in it. Lord John Russell, who had read the Memoirs, stated in 1869 that she was not implicated, but Lady Holland, who had also read them, stated in 1843 that she was. Sir Walter Scott seems in 1825 to have heard something from Moore of a dark reason for the destruction of the Memoirs, for, after lamenting the decision, which he attributes to "the executors," he remarks: "it was a pity," adding, "but there *was* a reason,—*premat nox*

poets will be romantic sometimes. (N.B. No romance about money was attributed to Mr. Scott himself)" (Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers, March 6th, 1817).

There was a "defect of moral force in Scott's character; invariable candour and moderation in judging men is generally accompanied by such a defect. Scott seems to be always disposed to approve of rectitude of conduct and to acquiesce in the general rules of morality, but without any instinctive or unconquerable aversion from vice,—witness his friendship for Byron" (Henry Taylor to Edward Villiers, October 15th, 1827).

In contrast to Scott, Wordsworth seemed to Ticknor to have no regard at all for Lord Byron. Though Wordsworth admired Byron's talent, he had a deep-rooted abhorrence of his character, and besides seemed to feel a little bitterness against Childe Harold for taking something of Wordsworth's own *lakish* manner, and what was worse, "borrowed some of his thoughts" (Ticknor's "Journal").

alta." However this may be, in 1824 all—and more particularly the lady herself—were very uneasy on this point. She wrote on Sunday, May 16th, 1824: "It is *my* very decided opinion that the Memoirs *ought* to be burnt, and I think the sooner the better." [1] Next morning they were burnt.

Lady Byron always suspected, but never *knew positively* that Mrs. Leigh was implicated in the Memoirs. Mrs. Leigh had expressed so great an anxiety to have them burnt for *Lady Byron's* sake! [2]

The meanest part of the whole business was that some of those concerned endeavoured afterwards to shift the responsibility for their own betrayal of Lord Byron's confidence on to his widow, who would never have consented to it had it depended upon her, was actually at a distance from the spot, totally ignorant of what was being done, and did not approve when she heard of it for the first time after the perpetration of the treachery. Proof of this will be found in Appendix A. Documents of 1820 will be found in Chapter V which show how little fear Lady Byron had of the Memoirs on her own account, though she rightly wished to shield her daughter's youth from insulting public discussion of private family circumstances.

Any kind of publication about the domestic relations of Lord and Lady Byron was criminal, and it was treacherous to destroy the Memoirs. A third course was clear: simply to lock them up for a term of years, or lives, in safe hands, such, for example, as Hobhouse's, or Colonel Francis Hastings Doyle's. Lord Byron's own words about his MS. were that he "gave it to the care" of the man [3] who afterwards pawned it.

The pawner and his creditor, after pretending to burn the authentic Autobiography because it was shocking, joined fortunes to present to the public a contraband version of Lord Byron's vices. The improper Venetian

[1] The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Robert John Wilmot Horton.
[2] Lady Noel Byron to the Earl of Lovelace, August 3rd, 1843.
[3] Moore.

women of the Byronic Venusberg were given the *beau rôle* of the poet's nine Muses in this travesty of an apotheosis. But besides the scandals, which would have been found in the Memoirs, others were dragged in or invented, which assuredly were not included in them. For example, Lord Byron's officious traducers added endless false and sentimental garbage about his ignominious fan-carrying bondage to Guiccioli. The Memoirs had not been continued to those four years of forced and penal adultery—opprobrious end to the merry madness of his "nine w——s of Venice" [1]—as he called them.

If post mortem advertisements in rotten books could create a poet's literary concubine out of an elderly nobleman's divorcible wife, hard and dull in character, with an evil countenance and dumpy figure, Guiccioli's claims to that sort of notoriety were trumpeted without much pretence of decency. Doubtless in a way she might be considered to hold Lord Byron by right of capture. She certainly showed great determination not to let him loose again. In the lassitude of reaction after his Venetian *comédie rosse*, he just endured his thraldom; but he loathed and detested it from the very first,—wrote of it with despair to his friends, with bitter taunts to

> "her, whom of all earthly things
> That lived, the only thing he seemed to love." [2]

Augusta he reproached with having driven him into the trap. At the same time he promised her that if she would come out to him in Italy, she should never meet "any Italian acquaintances of his." He took very good

[1] Lord Byron's conversation at Venice, as described to me from oral tradition, was very daring and bitter, with a note of forced jocularity, but there were many grossly exaggerated reports of his excesses. Trustworthy contemporary information from Venice, dating from the first half of the nineteenth century, disposes completely of the most repulsive abominations. There was no foundation for the crass and egregious suggestions of Shelley in a letter to Peacock, which became a favourite quotation for credulous ill-wishers. Shelley's good faith was probably imposed upon by Jane Clairmont, who had been prowling about with him in the neighbourhood of Venice at the time, and like other spies was quite capable of passing off her own inventions as information picked up.

[2] "Manfred," Act III, Scene 3.

care also that Lady Blessington should not be exposed to the indignity of an encounter with Guiccioli.[1] Guiccioli's one attraction for Lord Byron was her ancient and noble birth. This was the bait that caught him. After the low company of the three previous years, he was not sorry to let his friends hear of a lady of high degree.

Sir H. Davy, who went to Ravenna early in 1820 to see Lord Byron, found him anxious to get off with Davy to Bologna, professedly to see Lady Davy, but really to give Guiccioli the slip.[2] In pauses between struggles to escape from his keeper, Lord Byron relieved his oppression of spirits in letters to various people (including even Lady Byron), to whom he repeatedly wrote that Guiccioli knew he did not love her and charged him with it.

Byron had been seized in an impudent man-trap set by one bent on rupture even of such bonds of decency as were imposed at Ravenna ; for dreary years he mouldered under a stifling incubus. Such was the dismal termination of delights which in one form or other so often lurks for the man of passion. It has been said that the hunt for enjoyment draws the pursuer far and farther away from it. With each fancied obstacle removed, happiness is still missing.[3] The nature of the man of pleasure passes through successive stages of deformation ; from romantic he declines into sensual, vicious, cold, callous, malignant.[4] Byron, however, roused himself from final petrification, but only when he was fey.[5] He shook off

[1] It is strange that both Lady Blessington and Mrs. Leigh sunk by 1832 to the level of contact with Guiccioli, who had actually become a friend and correspondent of Lady Blessington's, and was admitted to visit Mrs. Leigh in the summer of 1832, spent hours with her speaking of Lord Byron—not omitting Lady Byron's sins against him (*v.* "Correspondence of Lady Blessington").

[2] Moore's Diary, iii. 118.

[3] Substance of some thoughts in a note-book of Lady Byron's, 1817.

[4] Substance of a maxim of Lady Byron's written in 1851.

[5] This ancient English word, probably of Scandinavian origin, seems to have only survived in Scotland, and is perhaps best known from a striking passage in "Guy Mannering": "'I think,' said the old gardener to one of the maids, 'the gauger's *fie*'; by which word the common people express those violent spirits which they think a presage of death" ("Guy Mannering," 1815, i. 135).

his incubus, and went to the East to fulfil his destiny and die. His "madness of the heart" was over, and the remaining months of his life were spent on repeal of the Union of Greece with Turkey. He liked and respected Turks more highly than Greeks, but was the restless foe of prescriptive authority, whether national or alien, in all places and times.[1] On his tomb might be written the last farewell of another great man whose heart was transfixed by indignation:

"Abi viator, et imitare, si poteris, strenuum pro virili libertatis vindicatorem."

His death following closely on participation in a great and necessary rebellion, gave an instant's shock to the country which had expelled him; but it could not revive his momentary fashion. He was inevitably superseded by voices fitter for a new era, and by more favoured lyrical artificers. The English had learnt to see in him little beyond dismal exaggeration. They followed their

The word originally meant "fated to die, marked for death," not merely in those violent spirits. The Icelandic form is, *feig-r*, *morti vicinus*. The dictionaries quote the proverb: "*eigi fry's feigs vök*—the water will not freeze for the fey." Lord Byron was superstitious about his destiny. Often he fixed his gaze towards the East, saying: "There it is, I must return to the East to die."

[1] Lord Byron never displayed or felt much enthusiasm for the inhabitants of modern Greece. He was ready to sacrifice money, occupations and enjoyments on the altar of liberty, but there may have been in this as much love of power and celebrity as of the principle of freedom. He hated oppressors more than he loved the oppressed. Heroism of opinion was combined with the spirit of adventure and restlessness. His devotion was not to the cause of Greece, but to that of rebellion all over the world. He was just as willing to raise a regiment and go to fight in Spain, America, or Ireland. He was equally ready for revolt either here or there, everywhere or nowhere. At Genoa in 1823, when about to start on the nearest chivalrous or buccaneering enterprise in which he could emancipate himself from European law or social fetters, he constantly mentioned his calm conviction of the worthlessness of the people whom he proposed to emancipate and perhaps subject.

See Lady Blessington's "Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron," p. 137, and also an able anonymous letter addressed to "The Times" somewhere about September 15th, 1869.

This letter to "The Times" began with pointing out, what was of course perfectly true, that the accusation of incest was no new unheard-of revelation, but an old report, familiar to the poet himself and all his friends, and referred to in his published correspondence. The writer also mentions Lord Byron's cynical spirit of sneering at the Guiccioli's shameless pursuit of himself and his bad luck in having her thrown on his protection.

lights and shook him off. They did well to choose more appropriate teachers; they would have done better consistently to banish his memory as well as himself. The pillage of his tomb should never have been encouraged or condoned. Beyond what he had addressed to mankind himself, nothing ought to have been told about him. A respectful silence about his first apparition, his sterile celebrity, vicissitudes, eclipse and final wracke, was what any friend with a spark of fidelity or feeling was bound to observe. Some excellent friends he had who did not betray him when he was gone, but, unfortunately, he had also suffered too many of a meaner sort to creep into familiarity with him. He had even treated them with confidence and corresponded with them. This infatuation was more dangerous to his fame than all his other errors, and was not one of the least pernicious in itself. His moral atmosphere was not the better or purer for the company of dealers and adventurers in literature attracted by interest. For example, his taste and feelings were perverted by his toleration of the blackguard depreciation of Keats by some of these unworthy associates. When Keats was dead, Byron recanted his thoughtless assent to those infamies of criticism; nevertheless, when Byron was himself dead, all the coarse nonsense about Keats contained in private letters was exposed to the derision of the world. In mitigation of Lord Byron's responsibility for writing senseless confidences it should be remembered that their publication was unauthorized, and was a greater injury to him than to the great poet he had so little comprehended. Upon his death, faithless and thankless informers turned to the letters they had of his, or their notes of his conversation, for the money that might be in them. A batch of books thus began to be shot into circulation, and to infect a certain public with morbid curiosity. The earliest in the field made little pretence of disinterestedness. Others lay low for a time, watching for some more or less decent pretext. The parasites on Lord Byron who brought out books worked upon imper-

fect information with little accuracy. Their insight was small; they were wanting in good faith. The "Conversations with Lady Blessington" was the only comparatively creditable book—but she was not a parasite.

The largest number of black marks are due to two quarto volumes[1] (already referred to on p. 123), which were turned out by an Irish adventurer to the order of the Church and State bookseller, who was afflicted with the craze of possession (as "his birthright!") of the biography of an outlaw against every one of his own sacred institutions.[2]

When the news of Lord Byron's death burst upon England, on Friday, May 14th, 1824, Lady Byron's interest would have been to preserve the Memoirs, together with all other papers of his or hers, as records and proofs of her own history, which for her daughter's sake must, if possible, be suppressed—for a period—but also preserved. Discussion would be distracting to the child of Lord and Lady Byron as she grew up; but entire or partial destruction of the truth for Mrs. Leigh's deification was no benefit to Augusta Ada Byron. Lady Byron might have paid heavily in money for surrender of Lord Byron's manuscript into safe custody, but she could not have paid Mrs. Leigh's hush money for getting rid of evidence. Without Lady Byron's consent, knowledge, or even suspicion, Murray arranged with Mrs. Leigh the hangman's work of burning the Memoirs—executed with precipitation on Monday, May 17th—when Murray recovered simultaneously the entire principal and interest of his disbursement. Moore paid back what he had raised on pawn, and remained with his unpaid vexation. Nothing was done for Lady Byron by either Murray or Moore, but a story became current that she had offered £2,000 reward for the perpetration of the crime, and afterwards broke faith and refused to

[1] [See note 2, p. 15.]

[2] Moore's Diary, v. 77, May, 1826. "Murray . . . repeated, two or three times, that the 'Life of Byron' was his birthright."

pay up.[1] Moore was the only person with a plausible pecuniary grievance, not against her, but against those who rendered Lord Byron's gift valueless. And yet both he and Murray appeared from this time malignant towards her.

The plot against her peace and honour would not have been agreeable to Lord Byron. He had not wished her to be exposed to other insolence than his own. He was apt to repel vulgarian assumptions of familiarity towards any woman connected with himself. Notwithstanding the separation, he would never have surrendered her character to a venal travesty. Moore's "Letters and Journals of Lord Byron etc." were a vile misrepresentation of Lord Byron himself. The worst of his letters were included. There were juvenile letters, in which, having nothing to tell, he made up crude unrealities into idiotic nonsense for idiots to read. Subsequent notoriety could never convert trash written to Pigot into literature or biography. Lord Byron's memory was vilely gibbeted upon the refuse of his correspondence. Dissection of poets, poetry and works of art is delusive. Words displace realities; facts get shifted; theories are confused with what existed. The secret of life is never discovered by the posthumous spy. The secret of youth is not in the letters it writes; they mean nothing and explain nothing. The immature letter-writer is what Napoleon called an "idéologue—fonctionnant à vide." He cannot write with that total and absolute sincerity on which literary beauty must be founded. He neither thinks nor knows what he says—unable alike to say what he thinks and what he does not think. Right speech is long and arduous of discovery—speech that shall be true

[1] This fiction, accompanied by other misstatements concerning Lady Byron or Colonel Doyle, may be found in a letter printed with the signature "John Murray" in the "Academy" of October 9th, 1869. [If the author had seen the documents subsequently published by Mr. Murray, he would have withdrawn the word "fiction." Apparently, two months after the burning of the Memoirs, Lady Byron expressed herself as willing to join with Mrs. Leigh in compensating Mr. Murray if he were the loser, but she saw no reason to compensate Moore.—Ed.]

both in form and substance—that just reaches and not over-reaches its intention.[1]

Lord Byron's most interesting and important letters have been preserved in safety—*unpublished*—to this day, some by Lady Byron, and a very large number by his surviving executor, Hobhouse.[2] These last have more sincerity, wit, power and beauty than the best hitherto published.

Lord Byron's style was sometimes of the highest beauty, but it was greatly influenced by subject and by his associates, these last too often of the lowest order. Even the nobler literary forces were capable of injury to his poetry. Wordsworth said (October 27th, 1820, at Paris) "that the celebrated passage about Solitude in 'Childe Harold,' canto III., was taken from 'Tintern Abbey,' with this difference, that what is naturally expressed by Wordsworth, has been worked by Byron into a laboured and antithetical sort of declamation." "The whole third canto of 'Childe Harold' was founded on Wordsworth's style and sentiments. The feeling of natural objects which is there expressed, was not caught by Byron from nature, but from Wordsworth, and spoiled in the transmission."[3]

Wordsworth's faith in his own grandeur was strong; and it was brave in one who had so long been "the spoiled child of adversity." With advancing years it rather declined into a foible. Byron's somewhat angry and unwilling appreciation and more or less conscious or appropriate adoption of Wordsworth's tone in a few places, is not a little curious when it is remembered that

[1] "Tantôt la parole est trop faible pour rendre la pensée, tantôt elle la dépasse dans l'effort qu'elle fait pour l'atteindre" (M. Gaston Boissier in 'Revue des deux mondes," 1er Octobre 1902). Renan had written: "Le succès oratoire et littéraire n'a jamais qu'une cause, l'absolue sincerité"—which M. Boissier would thus qualify: "Sans doute, qu'on parle ou qu'on écrive, il faut être sincère; on ne doit jamais dire que ce qu'on pense, mais le penser et le dire ne sont pas la même chose. L'expérience prouve, au contraire, qu'il est très rare qu'on arrive du premier coup à exprimer exactement ce qu'on pense, comme on le pense et comme on le sent."

[2] [The letters left by Hobhouse (Lord Broughton) are still unpublished in 1921.—Ed.]

[3] Moore, iii. 161.

"from the 'Lyrical Ballads,' it does not appear that men eat or drink, marry or are given in marriage. . . . If the species were continued like trees (to borrow an expression of the great Sir Thomas Browne), Mr. Wordsworth's poetry would be just as good as ever."[1] Byron was no scientific versifier; Wordsworth was better equipped, without perhaps ranking as a perfect poetical artificer; but when all has been said by the experts, there are a host of lines by either, where no metrical skill could improve essence or form. An outlaw's passion glowed in one; the other, with firm philosophy, faced a world in convulsions.

Great deterioration of Lord Byron was produced by his intimacy with Moore, who had "converted the wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box,"[2] and who imparted something of his mean, vapid varnish of conceit to everyone who suffered him to approach them. Followers of the opposite camp to Moore were at the same time crawling about Lord Byron, to his great discredit and damage. The most besetting enemies of Lord Byron's genius were the band celebrated as "the impenetrable phalanx round the throne," by whom, "if a writer came up to a certain standard of dulness, impudence and want of principle, nothing more was expected."[3] Their colleague Croker was a friend of Moore, who called him (behind his back) "a lickspittle," but was himself the Croker of Whiggery. The company and communications of these men lowered Lord Byron incalculably as a man and as a writer to that extent that it has been said with partial—but only partial—truth, "that Lord Byron's prose is bad; that is to say, heavy, laboured and coarse; he tries to knock someone down with the butt end of every line, which defeats his object."[4] The wonder is that any fragments of letters from a Noble Poet to his attendant servilities should have been over

[1] Hazlitt's "Lectures, On Burns," etc.
[2] "Spirit of the Age."
[3] Hazlitt on "Jealousy and Spleen of Party."
[4] Hazlitt's "Plain Speaker," Essay I.

the level of the creeping things to which he wrote. The best of Lord Byron's letters were not accessible and still remain unpublished. They laid hands on those to inferior correspondents, and the better portions of these were difficult to discover in a thicket of weeds, sometimes rank and disagreeable,—editors' garbage and smug commentaries. Not all of Lord Byron's [letters] have a good flavour. Before his social education began, about 1812, they were little more than the crude insincere imitations, the infantile fabrications of "puerorum aetas inprovida," of no sort of significance either as to character or facts. Out of offal life cannot be reconstituted.

As the compilations multiplied and waxed fat, Lord Byron's less uninteresting letters—nearly stationary in number—became more and more wasted under the vacant mass of incoherent refuse which gentlemen of the press were pleased to advertise as Lord Byron's prose, with fat forecasts of fame and fortune.

His worst prose was put behind a mirage of hallucination and hysteria. Lord Byron was not a Byronese impostor; but he was made up into one by vulgar old augurs who stole his name, invented the pseudo-Byron religion, and finished in self-deception, somnambulism, epilepsy. They saw the unexistent, told the unknown, believed in the impossible. Most of them were afflicted with a childish aversion for Lady Byron that was quite unconnected with sympathy or respect for Lord Byron. In some the symptoms were morbid covetousness. Others were afflicted with argumentative hallucinations which would have wiped out of existence the separation as a tangible event—the consequence of antecedent causes. The real Byron world was to be fabled to nothing and nowhere—replaced by a crazy phantom standing in vacuity like the unthinkable universe of the Stoics:

> "sed vanus stolidis haec [error somnia finxit]
> amplexi quod habent perv[ersa rem ratione]
> . . . . . .

nec quisquam locus est, quo corpora cum veneru*nt*,
ponderis amissa vi possint stare *in* inani,
nec quod inane autem est ulli subsistere debet,
quin, sua quod natura petit, concedere pergat." [1]

Nothing is too stupid for belief. Dreamers evolved from their consciousness that Lord Byron knew of no cause for the separation. Some vague but studied complaints (such as his sly attorney had suggested to him) that he had received no formal communication of charges, were interpreted into unconsciousness of what they could possibly be.

Other and bolder discoverers of the non-existent gave out that there were no records of any causes of separation between Lord and Lady Byron. Finally, it was decreed by some determined infallibles, that there never were any causes for that insignificant event, which is thus reduced to a negligeable quantity. The omniscience of the uninformed is everlasting.

Lord Byron was successively stripped of every real and living attribute. It is difficult to comprehend how a story so much expurgated, and with so many signs of being spurious, could excite any other feeling than disappointment at its insufficiency. When people are invited to the spectacle of a man of passion, they do not expect to be shown a sort of abortion. Otherwise they would not stay through the performance, but leave before the fifth act, like the lady at a play in which another hero had been deprived of his identity. She did not care to see any more, exclaimed: "Ce pauvre Abélard ne m'intéresse plus!", and put out for home.

Tangibilities are not to be blurred out and reduced to impotence by unnatural mutilations and denials. Not all the old women in England could neutralize Lord Byron into a domestic character.

In reality the papers concerning the marriage of Lord and Lady Byron have been carefully preserved.

[1] Lucretius, i. 1068-9, 1077-80, with the missing words as supplied by Munro.

They are a complete record of all the causes of separation, and contain full information on every part of the subject.

It is true that papers of Mrs. Leigh's may have been destroyed by her, or subsequently disappeared in one way or another. All the information her papers contained about every thing, existed in duplicate in Lord or Lady Byron's documents, which are in perfect preservation; and this was well known to Mrs. Leigh herself, who had actually placed some important proofs in Lady Byron's own hands. Nothing could be more futile than endeavours to make away with the evidence she possessed against herself.

The bulk of her papers cannot be traced. Some cautiously selected fragments were in 1869, and afterwards from time to time, published as Mrs. Leigh's case for herself or against Lady Byron. Taken by themselves, the minute and insignificant fragments produced out of Mrs. Leigh's huge correspondence with Lady Byron and others, proved nothing and explained nothing for good or evil about any one. An abundance of virulent rhetoric and unsupported assertions against Lady Byron supplied the place of a basis of evidence for the charges made at her.

Though no incriminating evidence against Mrs. Leigh has turned up out of her own documents, its annihilation would have been a very short-sighted proceeding, of stupid and ineffectual cunning, availing only to suppress what mattered not, except possibly for power of writing and larger justice to the persons involved.

However this may be, it must be repeated and should be distinctly understood that no misfortunes, blunders or malpractices have swept away Lady Byron's papers or those belonging to the executors of Lord Byron. The essential records have not been got rid of. The facts which led to the separation are as distinct and comprehensible in existing documents as they were to Lord or Lady Byron and those in their confidence. All that passed between them was as well known to him as to

her, and the circumstances which forbade her return were even more present to his mind than hers. Her silence as to her motives was complained of, unreasonably—in the opinion of the present writer—for a complete specification of the grounds of her conduct must have had far-reaching consequences, and would have given him no information beyond what he already possessed much more fully. His memory was vivid for what concerned himself. With his peculiar personality, there might conceivably have been eclipses of memory for particular incidents in his fateful course towards the separation. When in a state of agitation he would drop some half-confidence without mention of names, and afterwards, being wholly absorbed in his recollections and projects, perhaps forget his own allusions, and that there was another being near him, a wife, who suffered and thought. When a woman is placed as she was, her mind works involuntarily, almost unconsciously, and conclusions force their way into it. She has not meant to think so and so, and she has thought it ; the dreadful idea is repelled then, and to the last, with the whole force of her will, but when once conceived it cannot be banished. The distinctive features of a true hypothesis, when once in the mind, are a precise conformity to facts already known, and an adaptability to fresh developments, which allow us not to throw it aside at pleasure. Lady Byron's agony of doubt could only end in the still greater agony of certainty, but this was no result of ingenuity or inquiry, as she sought not for information. Women are said to excel in piecing together scattered insignificant fragments of conversations and circumstances, and fitting them all into their right places amongst what they know already, and thus reconstruct a whole that is very close to the complete truth.[1] But Lady Byron's whole effort was to resist the light, or rather the darkness that *would* flow into her mind.

[1] The latter part of this paragraph is largely indebted to a penetrating analysis of similar situations in "Une Idylle Tragique" and "Le Fantôme" by M. Bourget. Certain passages therein applied so closely to what had to be

After his death she aspired only to peaceful obscurity, exemption from discussions which must be agonizing to her growing daughter, soon to enter the world—oblivion of the dreadful things said of her by her husband, when

> " His heart was swollen and turned aside
> By deep interminable pride," [1]

which had once conferred upon her an unnatural, dire celebrity. She was the one person involved in that tragic story who was innocent of wrong, true in word and deed, generous, resourceful, courageous amidst crushing difficulties, and so she consistently remained till the close of her life. The public were systematically deceived about her by distortions, suppressions, and inventions. An untrue piece of history has grown by degrees into a hideous popular delusion. The ancient maxim that " Delusion is strong and swift, wherefore it greatly outruns all else, and is first over the whole earth, perverting men," [2] was imposed upon some of us as youths to interpret as we could. Passage through the world construes it for every one.

During seventy years judicial blindness has overwhelmed a guiltless victim with infamy in place of the woman actually rescued by her from social and worldly ruin. " Tout se paie," said Napoleon at Saint Helena—sooner or later most wrongs are expiated, but often by a vicarious sacrifice. Lady Byron has been compared to Gemma Donati,[3] but the Beatrice whose " soft breast . . . unto his was bound by stronger ties than the church

stated that an adaptation of able words which might almost have been written of the Byron story is truer and better than reflections composed with inferior insight into the nature and acts of men and still more women.

[1] " Siege of Corinth."

[2] ἡ δ' Ἄτη σθεναρή τε καὶ ἀρτίπος, οὕνεκα πάσας
πολλὸν ὑπεκπροθέει, φθάνει δέ τε πᾶσαν ἐπ' αἶαν
βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπους· αἱ δ' ἐξακέονται ὀπίσσω.

Iliad, ix. 505-507.

The latter half of this last line refers to lines 502-504, quoted on p. 110, and to the healing power of Λιταί.

[3] Moore's Quarto, i. 656.

link'd withal," had dreaded nothing so much as the poems addressed to herself, and had written to the supposed "Gemma Donati" (November 6th, 1816): "I heartily wish y^e^ verses *in the Red Sea*." This sort of Beatrice suppressed all she could, and did suppress the announcement that

> "We were and are—I am, even as thou art—
> Beings who ne'er each other can resign." [1]

But in 1830, when she was certain that, do what she would (and she had just given striking proofs of ingratitude), "Gemma Donati" would never betray her while alive, she committed to publicity those remarkable suppressed stanzas, to be represented as "breathing all that is most natural and tender in the affections of this [world]"!

Lady Byron was not absolutely disarmed—far from it. She could easily have confounded her traducers, and more than rehabilitated herself by producing her correspondence, which contained crushing evidence that the phantom of Astarte in "Manfred," of Azora in another poem,[2] of the "dear sacred name, rest ever unrevealed," had been no unreal apparition, but belonged to a living creature, *who had confessed everything* in September, 1816.

But there were weighty reasons for abstention. Lady Byron naturally shrank from a public appeal for her own justification; she considered first her daughter's happiness; she was unwilling to ruin a whole family. In addition she "had promised Lord Byron unconditionally" to be always a friend to her who was implicated—"a promise of kindness sealed by death." Lastly, Lady Byron thought "that the divulging of such a fact would be injurious to society, under circumstances like that of

[1] Epistle to Augusta.

[2] "Azora, dearest, thou whose thrilling name
My heart adores too deeply to proclaim."
Opening lines to "Lara" (*v.* Appendix C).

the actual case." Towards 1830, Lord Byron's literary influence was a "light of other days"—distant moonshine, but he retained some of that demonic power of attraction mentioned by Goethe.[1] "So strong was the personal influence, that the moral epidemic to which it did give rise might have extended still further; that the holiness and beauty of that relationship should through my means be sullied by a breath of doubt, would have been most painful to me."[2]

Unreserved truth has been thought unfit for a mixed public by more than one great man.[3] Family and society live on beneficent illusions. Something in the universe drives them to work for ends they do not understand. If they saw clearly, they would shoot their tiresome debts and duties off into phantom land. A keen but balanced thinker once stated in jesting words the evergreen truth that: "The best security for people's doing their duty is that they should not know anything else to do."[4] Human beings must not be led to discover that they are dupes to be virtuous; they must be left undisturbed in imperfectly realized theories, which by being believed produce conformity of practice. Men need not be forbidden to think that the love of sister for brother is infallibly pure and sexless; it is often wise and just not to search for undiscovered sins; but it is neither noble nor even expedient to fabricate false righteousness; and

[1] To Eckermann, March 8th, 1831.

[2] This is from a statement made some years later by Lady Byron. She had written on the same subject about 1819: "It is and above all appears strange that situations and feelings by no means enviable could allure to imitation, but youthful minds are indisposed to consider the consequences of any course of action when it is transfigured by a halo of sentimentality, and they are fascinated by the surrounding splendour. And admiration is not the only motive for imitation; there may also be the desire to become interesting in the eyes of others. Everything is passed as venial when seen through the induced colouring of romantic idealization."

[3] See Goethe's Conversation of February 25th, 1824.

[4] Bagehot's "Letters on the Aptitude of the French Character for National Freedom and Self-Government," in January, 1852: "What we opprobriously call stupidity, though not an enlivening quality in common society, is nature's favourite resource for preserving steadiness of conduct and consistency of opinion. I need not say that in real sound stupidity the English are unrivalled."

still less if at the same time infamy is invented for some one else who is innocent. Illusions and even deceptions have been tolerated in silence by great and just men as lesser evils than bringing down some great ruin ; but in actual speech, sincerity of opinion has been the practice of the wisest of the human race—and not least on the subject which underlies Astarte. When some one mentioned the theory that sisters only could love brothers with perfect and sexless purity, Goethe made short work of the fallacy, saying : " I should have thought the love of sister for sister was still purer and less sexual ! For otherwise we should have to ignore the countless instances, recorded or secret, where the most sensual attachment between sister and brother has prevailed." [1]

Lady Byron endured all and did not stand at bay. She would not speak and deliver up to be devoured by the multitude, instead of herself, another victim, the one not innocent. Fanny Kemble once not long before her own death spoke to the narrator of " Lady Byron's beautiful power of silence " ; when others said what she did not approve, she could hold her peace and let the subject drop. In the whole of her life she never said what she did not think or what was not true, but she could be silent. However hard pressed about her own secrets, or those of others (which happened more than once), she certainly never was squeezed into falsehood, and her presence of mind was equal to baffling questioners, who seldom, if ever, seem to have fished successfully for information or admissions. Lord Byron wrote of her that she was

" Mute, that the world might belie,"

[1] Goethe's " Gespräche," March 28th, 1827. It was in reference to a theory of Hinrichs's, in connection with the " Antigone " of Sophocles : " Dasz die familienpietät am reinsten im weibe erscheine, und am allerreinsten in der schwester, und dasz die schwester nur den bruder ganz rein und geschlechtslos lieben könne." " Ich dächte," erwiderte Goethe, " dasz die liebe von schwester zur schwester noch reiner und geschlechtsloser wäre ! Wir müszten denn nicht wissen, dasz unzählige fälle vorgekommen sind, wo zwischen schwester und bruder, bekannter- und unbekannterweise, die sinnlichste neigung stattgefunden."

but he forgot to mention that she was herself the person belied.

The original of Astarte, through whom and for whom Lady Byron had suffered so much, died October 12th, 1851, and Augusta Ada, Countess of Lovelace, died November 27th, 1852. Under those changed circumstances Lady Byron wrote :

" As the chief reason for absolute silence has ceased with my daughter's life, the question forces itself on my consideration whether there are not some facts engraven on my memory which ought to survive me.

" And now, after the lapse of forty years, I look back on the past as a calm spectator, and *at last* can speak of it. I see what was, what *might* have been, had there been one person less amongst the living when I married. Then I might have had duties, however steeped in sorrow, more congenial with my nature than those I was compelled to adopt. Then my life would not have been the concealment of a Truth, whilst my conduct was in harmony with it.

" Writing as I do towards the close of life, and after submitting to misconstruction for so many years, I trust that the spirit of self-vindication will neither be found in my pages nor imputed to me. I have no cause to complain of the world's unkindness ; on the contrary, I am grateful to it. In personal intercourse I have *only* to acknowledge the kindest and most generous treatment, and if I have sometimes been condemned by strangers without evidence, I have certainly been acquitted equally without proof by those on whom I had no claim, of the charges of listening to informers against Lord Byron, sanctioning treacherous practices, etc. Let me observe with reference to them, that there can be no *media via* as to such accusations, and the woman who could be guilty of any one of them could not be a trustworthy witness in matters relating to the husband she had injured and betrayed. Read then no further, you who hold this sheet in your hands, unless you can relin-

quish all prepossessions of that kind. Think of me as a Memory, not as a Person, for I desire not sympathy, but an impartial hearing.

"Yet when I look at the accumulation of difficulties in my way, I feel that the truths I may bring forward will but partially dispel those illusions, so long accepted as realities, and that even if not a fruitless, it is yet an ungrateful task to translate fascinating verse into bare fact. Apart, however, from any view to benefit the unknown Reader, who may have little disposition to attend to me, I naturally desire to leave a few counter statements for the information of my grandchildren, for I own that on that point the opinion formed of me does touch me."

This is the substance, somewhat compressed, of a sketch for [the] Preface of an unfinished narrative composed by Lady Byron about 1854. She does not appear to have used any of her earlier papers in writing it, but it agrees substantially with other documents so far as it goes, and is of some interest in establishing her soundness of memory, and as absolutely confirming her good faith. There are only a few minor discrepancies. She consulted several friends, supposed to be trustworthy (and with one exception really so), about the plan of leaving for publication at the time of her death a final and conclusive statement to settle for ever any discussion that might then arise.

It is a pity that nothing was decided that might have had the effect of clearing away the falsehood, vulgarity and Philistinism that still lie so ponderously upon Lord Byron's memory. Lady Byron left her papers to trustees, and as there were others in the hands of relations, there were too many persons concerned for perfect agreement on any particular mode of dealing with the trust. This has had unfortunate results. When once a league of misrepresentation has been formed, it lives and grows by the brute force of repetition, and gains unconscious adherents, who obediently repeat established fallacies. It takes an unusually sound

head to pick the way through a rotten old stock of materials.[1]

[1] In the remarkable letter quoted above, where Bagehot contrasts the English with the French, will be found the following pointed description of the English obtuseness to new and true ideas: "What I call a proper stupidity . . . chains the gifted possessor mainly to his old ideas; it takes him seven weeks to comprehend an atom of a new one; it keeps him from being led away by new theories —for there is nothing which bores him so much. . . . Inconsistency puts him out—'What I says is this here, as I was a saying yesterday,' is his notion of historical eloquence and habitual discretion."

CHAPTER VII

INFORMERS AND DEFAMERS

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn."—*Adonais.*

AS Lady Byron had foreseen, there did not fail after her death to be outbursts against her of "the rant of false feeling and false morality." These words were used by the Hon. Mrs. Norton in reviewing a specially despicable book about Lord Byron, in which "Lady Byron is maligned with a persistent rancour so excessive that astonishment almost supersedes indignation as we read." [1]

Mrs. Norton (who wrote anonymously) was almost Lady Byron's only friend in the press,[2] for it is impossible

[1] "The Times," February 13th, 1869. In "Lord Byron jugé par les témoins de sa vie," the ex-Guiccioli, ex-incubus to Lord Byron, ex-travelling companion to Lord Malmesbury, etc., etc., etc., had exclaimed: "Ere this, God has judged her [Lady Byron] above, but here below can those possessing hearts have any indulgence for her?"—"a sentence," remarks Mrs. Norton, "which, when we consider of whom and by whom it was written, is certainly as startling a picce of blasphemy as ever was fulminated against the dead."

It was on the same afternoon, of February 13th, 1869, when the review had appeared in "The Times," that Lord Houghton mentioned it in the Peers' gallery of the House of Commons, stated it to have been written by Mrs. Norton, and commended it highly. Mrs. Norton had to deny a later review in "The Times" of Mrs. Beecher Stowe, which was attributed to her by the uninformed on the strength of her former article.

[2] There was another anonymous article in favour of Lady Byron in "Temple Bar" for June, 1869. It was of some ability; but the writer was not so well informed as Mrs. Norton. His argument was that a similar fact must have existed to one which had prevailed with the House of Lords when Lord Thurlow "induced them to give, what had never been allowed before, the right of marrying again to a woman seeking divorce for the cause of her husband's adultery." In the particular instance before the House of Lords the husband had been guilty with his wife's sister. The wife could not, without guilt, return to him, and therefore she was permitted to marry again" ("Lord Byron's Married Life").

Whoever the writer in "Temple Bar" may have been, his articles (afterwards

so to describe the person to whom she had "given a partial confidence which was shamefully betrayed." It was quite manifest that "Mrs. Beecher Stowe's publication was not expressly or impliedly sanctioned by Lady Noel Byron." So Dr. Lushington said, on reading that to a large extent spurious production; for, as Dr. Lushington then declared, "a great deal of it was untrue, and could not have been stated by Lady Noel Byron." [1]

The article in "The Atlantic Monthly" [2] stated (not untruly) that the mystery of Astarte in "Manfred" was founded on fact, and (erroneously) that those circumstances had continued and been the direct cause of the separation.

Recollections of interviews are not evidence against a person reported, except by consent and with other reserves. Those who quote confidential matter without leave may discredit themselves, but really commit no one else. The most uncertain of hearsays are conversations long afterwards imputed posthumously, as was done by Mrs. Beecher Stowe nine years after Lady Byron's death. And yet every error of fact that was either found or imagined in the apocryphal version of Lady Byron's story was attributed to her contrary to truth and probability. Failure of memory was far more likely in Mrs. Stowe than in Lady Byron. No doubt it

in book form entitled "A Vindication of Lady Byron," Bentley, 1871) were a serviceable digest of the information then open to the public. His industry must have been considerable, his arguments were legitimate, and he was conspicuously honest. His work was not otherwise than creditable to him; and it drew upon him some elderly comminations from overfed sentimentalists stuffed with Lord Byron and "*his sweet sister*." Early Victorian stage villains were invariably attorneys; so it was assumed by the romance-mongers that "Temple Bar" must have been written by an attorney—it was too wicked to have any other author. And behind the hand of the attorney loomed of course a vast and nefarious, but somewhat vague conspiracy, like those which haunted Rousseau. Old-gentlemanly hallucinations could go no further. [See Appendix I and J, p. 338, note 2.]

[1] Miss Frances Carr to the Earl of Lovelace, in a letter dictated in September, 1869, by Dr. Lushington, who was recovering from illness, but still unable to write.

[2] *The True Story of Lady Byron's Life*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, published simultaneously in the "Atlantic Monthly" and in "Macmillan's Magazine," September, 1869. See Introduction, pp. vii-viii.

was proper to credit Mrs. Stowe with as much good faith as was consistent with her undeniable treachery, but under such conditions her accuracy was at least doubtful, whilst Lady Byron's veracity never was doubted by careful and unprejudiced minds. Lord Byron himself averred that she was "truth itself." It was a misplaced delicacy towards Mrs. Beecher Stowe to pass over her untrustworthiness so lightly, and beg the whole question by pretending that the rancour of misfortune had falsified Lady Byron's memory.[1]

Lady Byron was unquestionably entitled to be silent or speak as she thought fit about her history. She was free of all obligations, whether moral or material, to any other human being, but could not evade having to decide what should ultimately become of the records. She was perfectly justified in making confidences to any friend whose opinion or sympathy she valued. Nor was it in the least discreditable in her to treat an American as an intimate friend. She had had many American friends who fully deserved her liking and esteem. It was singularly unfair, long after the event, to blame her for having trusted the eloquent American philanthropist whose obvious good intentions were not altogether unassociated with real moral worth. Mrs. Beecher Stowe's character and genius had received universal recognition, which was almost deserved. She only wanted two or three of the more unobtrusive virtues: accuracy, fidelity, good taste and tact, for lack of which she uncon-

[1] This incorrect supposition is to be found in a letter of a charming writer, rather too often influenced by his likes and dislikes: "Ah! que c'est vilain à madame Beecher-Stowe! Les amis de Lady Byron pensent en effet qu'à la fin de sa vie elle n'avait pas l'exacte possession de ses souvenirs. Le chagrin avait brouillé sa mémoire. On devrait très peu se mêler de débrouiller des mystères de famille quand on est d'un tout autre pays, d'une autre société, d'une autre civilisation. J'ai eu l'honneur de voir à Paris madame Beecher-Stowe, avec sa jolie figure et son air de douceur et de bonne éducation. Je ne l'aurais pas crue capable de jeter avec tant de témérité un pavé à la tête du *Giaour*, de la *Fiancée d'Abydos*, de *Childe-Harold*. Quand on a écrit le charmant roman de *la Fiancée du ministre*, comment est-on capable de si vilains procédés envers un homme de génie? Je suis fâché que ce fonds de barbarie reste aux compatriotes de Franklin, de Washington, de Lincoln, de Longfellow, de Prescott, de Ticknor" (X. Doudan to Mademoiselle Gavard, 20 Septembre, 1869).

sciously turned traitor like the other publicists who busied themselves about Lord Byron. Her miserable puff of Lady Byron was no madder or baser than countless advertisements of Lord Byron which provoked no uproar. But as soon as Lady Byron's narrative had been robbed, perverted, and sold to her enemies, great was the cawing in the rookery. More especially was the bookselling caucus alarmed and enraged when "a sensitive journalist declared that a black mark had been set for all time against Byron's most perfect poems, and almost feels he shall never open his works again."[1] . . .

The proprietor of the "Quarterly Review" contrived to raise a contribution of materials suitable for his purpose from the residuary legatee of the person whose character was under discussion, that is to say Lord Byron's half-sister Augusta (the Hon. Mrs. Leigh). She had left behind her, all ready and arranged, a small collection of carefully selected documents calculated to rebut the charge that had been expected and prepared for all through her life. With suicidal blindness to ultimate consequences, the Leighs joined in the plan for the ruin of Lady Byron's character. Fortunately for immediate success in this object, the story had been so stupidly and inaccurately told [by Mrs. Stowe] as to facilitate a telling retort by a crafty advocate of few scruples.

The choice of Abraham Hayward [2] as counsel meant much, for his utility in a bad cause was never impaired by any tendency to straightforward fairness; but he was perhaps seldom quite trusted by his employers.[3] In the Byron discussions he surpassed himself in the

[1] "Quarterly Review," October, 1869. It was "The Times" in a review of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's "True Story of Lady Byron" which had written of the black mark against Byron's most perfect poems, and never opening his works again.

[2] Lord Beaconsfield, whom of course he hated, called him "a literary louse." Even his friend, the Countess of Cork, wrote of him ("Memories and Thoughts," 1886):

> "Not choice in witticisms, nor in anecdotes refined,
> And sometimes e'en betraying that too freely he had dined,
> In brief, though contradictory, and garrulous and wayward,
> Methinks we 'could have better spared a better man than' Hayward."

[3] [I think this is a mistake.—Ed.]

licence with which he manipulated all the information he could acquire. His office was like that of an Old Bailey lawyer, who receives no confessions and may be very imperfectly acquainted with the facts, but avers his client's innocence as a matter of course. He acted just as might be expected from a specialist of his description, when engaged in making the most of selected extracts from an immense correspondence to invalidate a particular fact, which those same papers would completely prove, if fairly and frankly produced. He was presented to the public with unusual ostentation as Lady Byron's exterminator. His employers freely abdicated all responsibility, loaded it on to him and retired from the scene. It was a virtual assumption by Hayward of other liabilities than his own; and, like all such transfers of credit, to a large extent misleading. Hayward could not have been the real inventor of all that was put in or left out of the articles. He took what was given to him. The vast suppression of material can only very partially have been his doing. And many things that were included—highly questionable suppositions, suggestions and assertions, may also not have been his own.

In the "Quarterly Review" articles he was most himself as Mrs. Leigh's advocate, but his mode of representing her cause was sinister. He founded his defence of her moral character on brutal physical depreciation. Ugliness proved chastity; the surest evidence of vice being beauty. Hayward's study of dead roués for knowledge on the eternal subject of women had left him with the notion that no woman is virtuous if she can help it. With logical simplicity he set to work, and exculpated Mrs. Leigh from the charge of incest by robbing her of identity, almost of sex, and competence for any sort of love passion. Like the deformities invented by Professor Wilson's friends to deface Hazlitt,[1] Mrs. Leigh's supposed unloveliness was purely imaginary.

It is not true that Augusta Leigh was corporeally ill-favoured. She was in reality a charming woman, who

[1] *Vide* "William Hazlitt," by Augustine Birrell, pp. 19 and 155.

exercised great fascination over all sorts of people in the brilliant society to which she belonged. Good looks are matter of taste and fashion. No two persons or generations think exactly alike. The "jolie laide" of one generation would have been the perfect beauty of another. Augusta's portrait by Holmes shows a very attractive woman,—not a regular beauty,—but well equipped with love powder, which she knew thoroughly how to handle. Her hair was very dark brown verging on black, fine and silky, not unlike that of her niece, Augusta Ada Byron,[1] when in about her thirtieth year.

If Mrs. Leigh had been ill-favoured in her generation, some reference to this misfortune might be expected in the long letters written about her by Lady Melbourne, Lady Caroline Lamb, Mrs. George Villiers, and others. By them she was fully and frankly discussed; but nowhere do any of them imply that her charms and looks were of indifferent repute. Lord Byron himself, in the original manuscript of "Childe Harold's Good Night to his Native Shore," wrote:

> "I had a sister once I ween
> Whose tears perhaps will flow;
> But her fair face I have not seen
> For three long years and moe."

In the pseudo-Byron forge, however, an ugly old figure was cast to represent her. Her youth was nullified under a shapeless blanket of equivocal motherliness. False maternalism at its best is a barren fallacy. It is also a road to sentiments and relations that are not maternal. A "motherly elder sister's" fleece is one of the disguises of ravenous passions. How often has some very much older woman than was Augusta in 1813 approached some very young man with an ambiguous air of maternity and the formula "mon cher enfant"!

Augusta's imaginary part of motherly good old woman in the Byron story rested on her suppositious physical deficiencies. The proof was clinched by her having once

[1] [Ada, Countess of Lovelace, mother of the author.—Ed.]

given him a Bible, and also by her twenty-nine years in 1813 (he being then only twenty-five). It is true that she was seasoned in the religious practices of her half-sister Lady Chichester, but services and readings of "the Chichester Gospel"[1] were mingled with her life without any very appreciable effect on it. She "made a regular compromise between religion and morality, between faith and good works." She had inflammable passions, and equal facility in yielding a platonic homage to virtue. "Her heart continued right towards God"—"uncontaminated by any trifling peccadillo in point of conduct." Her actions counted for so little!—not being officially known in this world; —and before Heaven it was enough to be "pure in the last recesses of the mind."[2] She propitiated God with a reverential etiquette suited to appease an oriental despot, by compliments and prostrations, by complacent professions that "humility was the only means of internal peace, and was a blessing *not purchased too dearly by the experience of our weakness*." Such were her very words. Divine peace and the sweets of sin, sacred and profane love, comfortably dwelt together in her heart—were almost identical. She could actually write in such a strain as that, or as the following: "I have sometimes thought that but for what is known to you my affections might have been wholly devoted to *this* world—as they are but too much STILL—but at least it is my endeavour to detach them— . . . it is not that I endeavour to excuse myself—but to improve to the best advantage *what is left*—"[3] A spurious state of feeling prevailed, in which professions and actions were at variance. There are few more suicidal facts or arguments for unthinking bibliolatry than Augusta's Bible and prayer-book gifts. As to her four years' advance upon Byron, young women of twenty-nine are not by nature exempt from temptation; on the contrary, it is then rather than

[1] Lady Byron on one occasion thus summed up Mrs. Leigh's religion.
[2] See Hazlitt on the causes of Methodism in "The Round Table."
[3] The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron, February 1st, 1817.

earlier that they are approaching the age of adventure. They are drawn to possess their youth in full and enjoy it in freedom before it is gone. They go forth to overcome the flaming ramparts of forbidden knowledge :

> " et extra
> processit longe flammantia moenia mundi," [1]

and explore the abyss of voluptuous romance. With a light heart they follow the enchantment—infinitely young and gay, as the tide of passion flows. To those who saw Byron and Augusta together, her adoration of him, which was very marked, displayed childish fondness and levity. She was always ready to laugh, even at what would have shocked the serious.

Except for a few descendants whose lives have been darkened by the after-effects of those accidents of passion, laughter, bitterness and despair, the actual Byron drama has never been visible or tangible, and now irrevocable progress has absolutely swept away those generations and their casualties from the consciousness of the monster humanity of to-day :

> " quando ea saecla hominum, quorum haec eventa fuerunt,
> inrevocabilis abstulerit iam praeterita aetas." [2]

If the life of humanity and the march of the universe (*res gestae*) are the accidents of matter in space (*eventa corporis atque loci*), and time itself is but an accident of accidents,[3] as was taught of old, it was also taught that the whole nature of things was ruled by one infinite and insatiable power without whom nothing could be born to light joy and love. The ancients personified in Helen at Troy the eternal power of fair women and fell desire. Had beauty which burns to the heart and love

[1] Lucretius, i. 72-73.
[2] Lucretius, i. 467-468.
[3] *σύμπτωμα συμπτωμάτων.* Munro's notes to Lucretius, i. 459 foll. :
" tempus item per se non est, sed rebus ab ipsis
consequitur sensus, transactum quid sit in aevo,
tum quae res instet, quid porro deinde sequatur,
nec per se quemquam tempus sentire fatendumst
semotum ab rerum motu placidaque quiete."

that takes lives never been given form and place in pagan myth; yet still would the race of Tyndaris endure and rule and ever replant unconsumed fire in Phrygian breasts, to swell and blaze in many a fierce and famous contest,[1] or determine some equally redoubtable obscure overthrow.

Augusta Leigh was as fateful an instrument of conflagration in her "little world in the great world of all" as a Greek Love or Nemesis;[2] but she had many lovable and some good qualities, and even the crime of her earlier years was not entirely wanting in mitigating circumstances. The destructive passion she inspired and shared is more endurable to read about than most of Lord Byron's other adventures, in which he neither breathed nor inspired any of that poetic emotion he could so beautifully express. It was not merely a case of warming an insensible heart in sensations he could not share. She charmed him from all else whether good or evil:

> "in gremium qui saepe tuum se
> reicit aeterno devictus vulnere amoris."[3]

The real bond between them was so little concealed and so unequivocally proclaimed in verse at intervals from 1813 to 1822, that the wilful closure of eyes to patent facts has always seemed inexplicable. The truth bursts from Byron's lines on first reading them. It was from them that it flashed as an entire surprise upon two generations of his descendants with no previous knowledge of family secrets or hints from any one. First his daughter, and twenty or thirty years later the present

[1] Lucretius, i. 471-475:

> "denique materies si rerum nulla fuisset
> nec locus ac spatium, res in quo quaeque geruntur,
> numquam Tyndaridis formae conflatus amore
> ignis, Alexandri Phrygio sub pectore gliscens,
> clara accendisset saevi certamina belli."

[2] Pliny the Naturalist (xxxvi. 4) related that a beautiful Venus by Agoracritus went with the name of Nemesis to Rhamnus. There was a legend that Helen (thence entitled Rhamnusis) had sprung from an egg laid by Nemesis at Rhamnus.

[3] Lucretius, i. 33.

writer, some two years after Lady Byron's death, were startled by Lord Byron's own revelations, which were long afterwards confirmed by acquaintance with private letters. Of all the strange attitudes of aliens towards the Byron literature, the oddest was their determination to treat as false Lord Byron's own striking intimations of a sin far less repulsive than some exaggerations and inventions about him which human imbecility and infatuation forged out of infinitely little knowledge.

Why should not a young man, in whose maternal family (as the fanciers of "les vidanges" were good enough to scent out and expose) insanity is found to have prevailed, who grows up, after a ruinous education, destitute of right-minded friends, have lost himself in the abysses of a forbidden paradise? After years of separation he meets again, almost as a stranger, but under circumstances of the closest intimacy, a charming half-sister a little older than himself, and of vastly more social experience and sense. In the careless time of George III, the code for the sexes of the same blood was less inviolate than in the Victorian epoch of vociferous propriety. Lord Bolingbroke in 1789 had run away with his half-sister, Miss Beauclerk, daughter of their common mother, Lady Diana Beauclerk,[1] who had been divorced from his father to marry Topham Beauclerk—Dr. Johnson's friend.

There were strange reports, possibly not unfounded, about Napoleon and all his sisters; and also about an English princess (the one who died blind at a considerable age) and one of her brothers.

Thus Byron and Augusta were allured by formidable and insidious temptation. It may have begun in uncon-

[1] Though perhaps not generally known, this elopement is referred to unmistakably in a letter from Horace Walpole to the Countess of Ossory, July 22nd, 1789. He had been to see "the mother" of "the wretched pair" at Twickenham, and found that "most unfortunate of all mothers" looking nearly killed by the blow. The fact is stated in an unpublished letter of Mary Noel, a great-aunt of Lady Byron's:

"L[d] Bulingbroke I suppose you have heard is gone off with his sister Miss Beauclerke who it is said is with Child a merry World my Masters" (Mary Noel to the Hon. Mrs. Milbanke, July 3rd, 1789).

sciousness, and been realized when it was too late. It was followed by long separation, vain regrets for lost happiness, and frantic desperation; vengeance of the carnal image,—"Le Stryge"—hewn in stone on Notre-Dame:

> "Insatiable vampire l'éternelle Luxure
> Sur la Grande Cité convoite sa pature." [1]

Headlong passion is followed by inexorable atonement, which prevents nothing and remedies nothing. Lovers may be sundered, but what has never yet been quelled is the impetuous nature of "undiseased mankind" [2]—the "violenta viri vis atque inpensa libido." [3]

> "nam si abest quod ames, praesto simulacra tamen sunt
> illius et nomen dulce obversatur ad auris." [4]

Primaeval force or intangible phantom, the mutual influence of the sexes is the one thing stable amidst the ephemeral purposes of humanity. Everything sacred or profane is outlived by the mother and queen of the pagan world, Latin Venus—*hominum divomque voluptas*—against which saintly hopes and promises of reformers are in vain. Memory and desire of felicity is stronger than sermons. It may be doubted whether all the homilies against that "purple-lined palace of sweet sin" [5] have not done more to allure than to repel prey for the insatiable vampire of libertinism. Lord Byron more than expiated his subjection to the vampire; "how he

[1] Lines etched by Méryon on the first state of his "Stryge."

[2]
> "The idol
> Of early nature, and the vigorous race
> Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons
> Of the embrace of angels, with a sex
> More beautiful than they, which did draw down
> The erring spirits who can ne'er return."
>
> "Manfred."

[3]
> "et Venus in silvis iungebat corpora amantum;
> conciliabat enim vel mutua quamque cupido
> vel violenta viri vis atque inpensa libido
> vel pretium, glandes atque arbita vel pira lecta."
>
> Lucretius, v. 962-965.

[4] Lucretius, iv. 1061-1062. For *ames*, Lachmann reads *aves* ("cravest"), and Munro suggests that it might be *amas*, but could not be *ames*.

[5] "Lamia," Part II, line 31.

communed with his own heart before he died, he would have told but could not," when he said to Fletcher: "Go to Lady Byron and tell her—" what, as Mrs. Norton wrote, "is known only to a pardoning heaven." Platitudes are unending, but none are more vain than those of the third and fourth generation. With what Goethe names "the indomitable spirit of Manfred," Byron would have repelled the moralists of all generations with the words:

"The hand of death is on me, but not yours!"

His defiance of those who taunt him with his many crimes was:

"What are they to such as thee?
Must crimes be punished but by other crimes
And greater criminals? Back to thy hell!"

The tragedy of Astarte might well interpose a barrier between Lord Byron's works and popularity. After all that has passed, upright judges should, perhaps, hesitate before pronouncing a completely black mark upon the Augusta series of stanzas, but it is a prostitution of literature to set them up as inspirations of pure and sacred love. The pagan glow of those exquisite verses is that of profane and material love—"offered from my heart to thine"—whose "gentle hand to clasp in" his is the one thing he desires:

"Could thy dear eyes in following mine
Still sweeten more these banks of Rhine!"

In 1816, on their first appearance, the public found equal difficulty in believing they could possibly be addressed to a sister, or that there was any other love at that time which could account for them.[1]

Great indulgence would be due to Mrs. Leigh's own descendants if they had spoken out in her exculpation, however bitterly and unfairly. In their position, perfect and absolute good faith and good temper could

[1] Mary Godfrey to Thomas Moore, December 24th, 1816. See Appendix E, for the Rhine lines.

hardly be expected from them. But the manufacture of infamy for Lady Byron was not properly speaking their act. They were not people to disregard all decencies of conduct and language about her. They sought to fortify their own discretion by consulting their cousin, the [third] Earl of Chichester [1]—as kind and honourable an adviser as could be desired. He was of course liable to be deceived about the character of his aunt, Mrs. Leigh; nor was it wonderful that the truth should have been repugnant to him, and that he would not understand and could not like perfect justice towards Lady Byron. He had not, however, forgotten what had been feelingly expressed by his mother, Mrs. Leigh's half-sister—that some gratitude and respect were due to Lady Byron from the Leighs. The Dowager Countess of Chichester had written (May 25th, 1856) to Lady Noel Byron herself: [2] "I am on the verge of 80, but should it please God to spare me another Winter . . . I shall be much gratified if we could meet once more in this world, that I might have an opportunity of assuring you of y° grateful sense I have *ever* entertained of your kindness to my late Sister and to several Members of her unfortunate family."

The plan of campaign against Lady Byron's character was neither devised nor managed by any of the Byrons or their representatives, kindred or connections. It was no cry of anguish from wounded affection, but tactics or temper of a more mercantile character, which must be traced back to the commercial dislikes of the parties guilty of destroying Lord Byron's memoirs.

The apocryphal anecdotes of the "Quarterly Review" in ridicule of Lady Byron, and its pretended revelations of her misdeeds, were accepted with glee by the baser elements of public opinion and also by some who ought to have felt more generosity. There was a general welcome to pretexts for devoting her to the infernal gods.

[1] [In the first edition of "Astarte" he is erroneously called "Second."—Ed.]

[2] [Lady Byron had assumed the name of Noel in 1822 on inheriting the Noel estates in Leicestershire from her mother.—Ed.]

Why were they all so determined to dislike her without really knowing anything about her ? There was perhaps the prejudice of ignorance against something strange and unknown, but that was not all. She was single and honest—hateful therefore to worldliness and vulgarity—unloved by the sheep of fashion—that unthinking aggregate which bleats with the wolves in pious repetition of slander.

Admirers of calumnies against Lady Byron (and they were many) addressed their congratulations to Hayward, on whom everything was fathered. To do him justice, he was as ready for blows as for brag, and would have "fought like wild cats"—a willing substitute for a reluctant fighter. He was a sort of literary incarnation of the fighting editor in Tennessee, retained to guard the office of his chief and answer "That's me!" to any rival pugilistic expert who calls to inquire: "Have I the honour to speak to the poltroon who edits this mangy sheet?" [1] Hayward's functions turned out to be light. The prize-fighting classes were with him, and it was mostly ignored how vulnerable he was. A more perfectly informed few were forbidden to make use of their knowledge. Instead of just punishment he received flowery compliments. One friend of his own sort wrote to him expressing the opinion that Lady Byron had "an ill-conditioned mind preying on itself till morbid delusion was the result; or that she was an accomplished hypocrite, regardless of truth, and to whose statements no credit whatever ought to be attached." [2]

Thus was pleased to write Sir Alexander Cockburn—a pharisee in the carcase of a libertine, grown old in debauchery and the philosophy of the Old Bailey, not esteemed as a lawyer, but much liked by his boon companions. He was a capital speaker in a bad cause.[3] His parliamentary reputation was founded on a single

[1] See Mark Twain's "Journalism in Tennessee."
[2] Lord Chief Justice Cockburn to Abraham Hayward, November 7th, 1869.
[3] Cf. Greville Memoirs, November 19th and 23rd, 1856. The Hon. Lionel Tollemache's "Talks with Mr. Gladstone," p. 55.

speech in defence of some of Lord Palmerston's worst acts. His manner was vulpine, voice beautiful, and countenance more than saturnine, satanic as that of Lord Lyndhurst. A long course of studies on the everlasting subject of women had led him to the conclusion that the best of them is worthless. A long series of successes in hanging more or less guilty persons raised him to redoubtable pre-eminence amongst experts of the gallows. He was a singular and formidable figure of vice sitting in judgment on crime; but when vice goes on to preach the gospel of truth against ill-conditioned minds, morbid delusions, hypocrisy and false witness, the tragic mask falls off and leaves bare the grimace of Heliogabalus.

The determined provider for the scaffold who thus pronounced sentence against Lady Byron did so without trustworthy evidence that the falsehood if any was contained in her own authenticated words. But that is not all. There is reason to believe that at the very date of his unjust language about Lady Byron the old fox had privately seen letters of 1813 and 1814 which proved the fact of incest, and indeed that he had himself been the first to discover the overwhelming effect of the evidence therein contained. He may have been bound in honour not to disclose what he had read and advised about confidentially, but assuredly he was equally bound in honour not to aver what he had ascertained to be false—the innocence of Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh. After such knowledge of their guilt, it was not far removed from perjury to join Hayward and find perjury in Lady Byron.

The charges against her would instantly have collapsed if all her papers had then been accessible and available; and on the whole it would have been better if her responsible trustees had been in a position to interpose their authority and settle once for all and justly her status in history. A painful business would then have been over and done with. But there were great obstacles, material and moral. Amongst other objections, all of

them felt a repugnance to corroborating any part of a tale so wickedly sprung on the world. Then there was a want of union between half-a-dozen different persons. The various executors, trustees, descendants or friends (including the present writer) who were acquainted with the essential facts (and had proofs of them) were neither able nor willing to produce them on their own sole responsibility. To some of her trustees it would have been a great relief if truth and justice could have prevailed without separate action on their part. But from the best and kindest motives and long habit of silence, Dr. Lushington's influence, which was inevitably great over the others, was exerted to prevent or at least postpone revelation. The date 1880 had been originally mentioned by Lady Byron herself as the earliest possible one for a discretionary disclosure. In 1849 Lady Noel Byron had consigned to Miss Frances Carr at Ockham Park a box containing a large number of the most important Byron papers, and wrote the following directions as to their ultimate destination and use. Firstly, Lady Byron refers to their inclosure in a metal box with secure lock. Then she desires :

" 2. That Miss Frances Carr shall keep the said Box unopened (leaving access to its contents to me only if desired) for Thirty Years.

" 3. That she shall by her Will or other arrangements secure the transfer of the said Box at her decease to the care of one of the following persons—the others being also responsible for the Trust.

" Sir Francis Hastings Doyle B^{t}.

" William Lushington Esq^{re} (son of D^{r} Lushington)

" Henry Bathurst Esq^{re} of Doctors Commons.

" 4. That the Box, which contains Byron documents and letters, shall be opened at the expiration of Thirty Years, namely in 1880, by the then surviving Trustees or Trustee abovenamed, and the contents thereof shall be disposed of according to their best judgement, for the interests of Truth & Justice, and with due regard to the

feelings of whoever may then be the Representative of my Family.

"Anne Isabella Noel Byron."

The paper was thus signed on February 18th, 1850. The provisions of Lady Byron's will in 1860 as to her remaining papers were very similar, and absolutely confirm the above-quoted document, which remains now the principal authority by which any and every custodian of Lady Byron's papers must be governed.

Dr. Lushington was deeply grieved at the scurrility of the libels on Lady Byron of 1870, and he repeated emphatically to the trustees that at the time Lady Byron was driven to the decision of parting from Lord Byron she had cogent reasons on account of cruelty and adultery, that there was nothing else at that time, for she was still determined to repel from her mind all belief in incest, a supposition that might well perplex her, being almost equally difficult altogether to reject or actually to accept. But Dr. Lushington added that Mrs. Leigh subsequently confessed the crime.

Lady Byron's truth was not doubted by those who had been in her confidence, though they had no other material evidence than her own word; they were faithful and steady in disbelieving the revilers with all their garbled evidence. Whatever impostors and lunatics might pretend, not one of Lady Byron's real intimates ever wavered, though of course it was impossible for them to depart from silent fidelity. The attitude of her friends is well explained in a letter of one of them, an able and good old woman, though a philanthropist—Mrs. Barwell, author of children's books.[1]

[1] Her philanthropy was not what has been well described as "the counterfeit coin of charity."—"Congrès de Vérone," xiv., where Chateaubriand refers to the commercial hunger concealed behind the Slave Trade agitation: "Le marquis de Londonderry et le duc de Wellington, ennemis des franchises de leur pays, M. Canning, élève de William Pitt et opposé à la réforme parlementaire, tous ces torys adverses pendant trente ans à la motion de Wilberforce, étaient devenus passionés pour la liberté des nègres, tout en maudissant la liberté des blancs. . . . Le secret de ces contradictions est dans les intérêts privés et le génie mercantile de l'Angleterre; c'est ce qu'il faut comprendre

LOUISA MARY BARWELL TO SOPHIA DE MORGAN.[1]
(Extract.)

[Monday] Jan^{y} 10th [1870]

Dear M^{rs} de M——

You must pardon all abruptness—as I have a feeble hand and write with difficulty——

You ask my " views " on this most painful subject—M^{rs} Stowe has committed the grave error (whatever her motive) of going to the Public with insufficient evidence—arrogantly expecting her name to command universal belief—She has committed a flagrant breach of confidence, and without even the justification of producing a history, upon such evidence that no doubt could be fastened upon it—Now because M^{rs} S— has done this, I see no reason why Lady B's friends should follow her example—they can produce no evidence stronger than their own convictions of her truthfulness—all that they know they heard from her or her dearest & most trusted friends—I do not feel that because M^{rs} S— has betrayed a confidence I am thereby released from the trust reposed in *me*—and I think this applies to all her friends—the *family* alone excepted—Should they now, or at any future time, hold in their hands, a complete chain of evidence, furnished from other sources than Lady B's own authority or testimony, *then* they would be justified in giving it to the world—nothing short of a case so perfect, that the most acute lawyer can see no flaw will now be of any avail to stay the flood of calumny & obloquy w^{h} M^{rs} Stowe has been the means of letting loose upon the character of one of the noblest of human beings——

She kept silence though goaded and calumniated—& *that* is the example, *we*, her friends must follow—Why did not M^{rs} Stowe consult the Grandchildren ? What must be the vanity which supposed M^{rs} Stowe could settle a question for the present world and for future history—which the *life* of Lady B had not been able to

afin de n'être pas dupe d'une philanthropie si ardente et pourtant venue si tard : la philanthropie est la fausse monnaie de la charité."

[1] Sophia Freud, wife of Professor Augustus De Morgan.

set to rest—And the friends who still remain must not assume to themselves any power to convince, simply by their own declarations of their convictions of her truth—every tittle of evidence rests upon her statements only—how can it be otherwise ?——

The links are missing—whatever they may be—w^h would explain those letters—but depend upon it they will not be found amongst any but the associates of earlier days, or amongst Written records—out of reach—Every line, short of unimpeachable evidence that has been, or will be written, has damaged & will damage—still further her reputation——

I see no generosity in M^rs Stowe—I only see great defects of judgment & a great desire for a place in public estimation as the proclaimer of a Secret—& the power to boast of the confidence placed in her by such a woman as Lady B— How else could she blind herself upon the subject—; she has drawn upon herself *universal* condemnation—not a single pen has attempted to justify her—*She* alone could not or would not estimate the Evil she has done——

The Article in the Saturday Review of the 25^th Dec^r is powerful, and fair if considered from the Writers point of view—& he admits the truth of the Story.—Although reluctantly——

You will quite feel that in holding the opinions I have expressed, I can not supply any information—I hope I may have succeeded in leading you to adopt my views——

The Articles in the Temple Bar was the only reply needed to Guiccioli's Book & the best justification of Lady B—*unless direct* evidence other than *her own* had been forthcoming——

I hope you will not be *too much* troubled to decypher this—Rheumatism has enfeebled my right hand—but except this, my health is as good as I can expect at my age——

I hope you & M^r de Morgan are well——

believe me,

yours very truly,

Louisa M. Barwell.

This letter states the actual question clearly and accurately. It defines what was too much forgotten by everybody :—that the issue of fact about Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh depended on "a complete chain of evidence furnished from other sources than Lady B.'s own authority or testimony." Mrs. Barwell was right in considering that the "written records" which at that time were detained "out of reach" must contain the "missing links" which would explain and justify all Lady Byron had done or written. Mrs. Barwell thoroughly understood that the really decisive evidence against Mrs. Leigh was not and could not be Lady Byron's, who (as Lord Byron said) was truth itself, but could prove no more than came within her own knowledge. She could testify to her own impressions : how from the first she held fast to belief in Mrs. Leigh's purity and resisted unfavourable interpretations of what occurred as long as was possible and longer than other wives in her place would have done. Statements written by Lady Byron in 1816 and 1817 describe her extreme miseries and perplexities, how her opinion fluctuated between agonising suspicion and comforting error, how, under the delusive influence of hope, or rather reaction from despair, she had endeavoured to feel and express confidence and affection. There had been moments when she could have wished to see a dagger plunged into that heart whose treachery seemed revealed, but Mrs. Leigh's voice of kindness and evident wish to protect her from Lord Byron's fits of rage would again resolve the impulse into tears. With a broken heart and imprudent generosity she had written to Mrs. Leigh letters afterwards basely used to blacken the helpless inexperience of the writer. Her narratives related how continued trust in Mrs. Leigh gradually became more difficult, and finally impossible, and how ultimately Mrs. Leigh confessed her crime. All these statements and narratives of Lady Byron's were only secondary evidence as to the conduct of the half-sister. On the other hand, Mrs. Leigh's own correspondence during and after the period

of her confession, and certain other documents and memoranda, existed which constituted primary evidence. Lady Byron's own written testimony corroborated and completed that part of her case as to which it was not of itself decisive.

The impressions of Mrs. Leigh's guilt had been forced into Lady Byron's mind chiefly by incidents and conversations which occurred while they were all under one roof. Lord Byron never then long abstained from allusions that could not be otherwise interpreted, and Mrs. Leigh was unaccountably passive under his hardly-veiled hints. But as soon as Mrs. Leigh was out of the way, and there was sensible relief from the frenzy excited in Lord Byron by her presence, Lady Byron began to reproach herself for her involuntary suspicions, and resolved to quell and repudiate them. These suspicions flowed and ebbed with the feelings that burst from Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh's manner. It was in the earlier half of 1815 that his inclination towards her was most violent, and there were moments when Lady Byron felt nearly certain of the past and had even a strong apprehension of a renewal. At that time Mrs. Leigh comfortably ignored all the strange appearances called forth by her presence in Piccadilly. She was preternaturally cool and collected, seemingly unaware that she could be an object of suspicion or anxiety. She slipped out of explanation and shifted the point with an obtuseness hardly natural, though it seemed unaffected at the time. She almost overdid it; but only on reflection would the thought occur: "Très polie! mais pas moyen de s'expliquer avec elle!" She could not and would not comprehend; answered what had not been said with something else that was perfectly trivial. This went on with all sorts of vicissitudes till the close of her first visit to Piccadilly a little before the end of June, 1815. Lady Byron was then really anxious to get rid of her, made her fix a time to go, and held her to it. After her departure Lord Byron was rather quieter on that subject, and during the twenty weeks of her absence (at Six Mile

Bottom) Lady Byron could persuade herself that it was all a hideous dream.

When Mrs. Leigh came back on November 15th before Lady Byron's confinement, he seemed much alienated from Mrs. Leigh and entirely occupied with women at the theatre. During the confinement he resumed familiar talk with her, and she used to sit up with him till late in the night to keep him quiet. After Lady Byron's recovery, he now and then dropped references to past intercourse in very crude terms—and before Mrs. Leigh, who passed over such speeches with well-acted indifference ; but he seemed to have no inclination for a renewal. In December and January he appeared hardly responsible for what he said and did. Mrs. Leigh was the most eager of those in the house with him to adopt the hypothesis of his insanity. She was in constant terror of what he might say next. She occasionally uttered vague sentiments of remorse, and repeatedly said she had forfeited all hope of salvation ; but she was more afraid of discovery in this world than of consequences in the next. In her desperation she seemed ready to anticipate his disclosures by confession, though on the whole she preferred to discredit him as a madman. Lady Byron was now greatly perplexed by his mad fits, and attributed much of what he said to insane delusions. She went through extreme alternations of opinion and plans, but left London on January 15th determined to think Mrs. Leigh her truest friend, and reject the suspicions, vivid as they were. In one respect she owed deep gratitude to Mrs. Leigh, who, with Mrs. Clermont, had faithfully striven for Lady Byron's protection and preservation when ill and in need.

Mrs. Leigh's letters from Piccadilly in the last fortnight of January were devoted to Lord Byron's alarming state of mind and conduct. She represented her presence as necessary to prevent suicide. She strongly deprecated any announcement of measures of separation as likely to drive him to desperation. There was much obvious art in this, which could not but attract Lady Byron's

attention and revive mistrust about everything. Mrs. Leigh was not insincere in her fears about Lord Byron and her belief that the scandal of a suit in the ecclesiastical court would be a great evil for everyone, but above all she was frightened of reports and disclosures concerning herself.

Lady Byron's letters from Kirkby in January were inspired by the resolve to trust Mrs. Leigh, to reject the hypothesis of her crime, and to acknowledge both the affectionate devotion to herself and the solicitude for Lord Byron's preservation. It was a point of honour and duty to give entire confidence—not to reserve the possibility that Mrs. Leigh might after all be a liar and worse. She did full justice to what was in fact true, that she had received kindness. Nothing in her letters was false. She kept silence on the main question. She could not and did not say that she knew Mrs. Leigh was innocent. Nowhere and never did she go further than to omit reference to what was then beyond positive knowledge. Mrs. Leigh's very real merits and services were well within Lady Byron's knowledge.

There is inevitably something ridiculous in being too generous, in giving a large measure of confidence to persons who do not quite deserve it. It is more prudent to treat everyone as a potential traitor or enemy, to store up every possible suspicion intact for future use. Lady Byron did not write with the caution of an attorney. She was but a very young woman, agitated and desperate, and penned incoherent and confidential letters, instead of composing carefully and " without prejudice " documents calculated to form a serviceable case if produced by themselves without other context than the malignant commentaries of prejudiced enemies. For about a fortnight she wrote unwarily. But gradually her eyes were opened in every respect. Former impressions returned with increased force and fixed themselves into the conviction, which never again could be shaken, that after all Mrs. Leigh must be guilty pretty nearly of everything that Lord Byron had intimated. At the same time Lady

Byron became aware that she had been putting weapons into the hands of an unscrupulous and desperate woman, and that her letters might be used unfairly—strained into meaning what they did not contain. After January, 1816, she wrote in a more guarded manner and at longer intervals, till after her first interview with Dr. Lushington the correspondence became infinitesimal and was ultimately suspended.

It would have been better, as Colonel Doyle afterwards explained to Lady Byron, not to have written at all to one who was engaged in a hard struggle for self-preservation, and well knew how to use and misuse everything that came within her reach.

But, above all, such letters ought never to have been published isolated from genuine complete information, and unsanctioned by Lady Byron's executors and trustees. They were written in the strictest secrecy, from which no release was ever given. They were intrinsically unimportant—told virtually nothing and explained less. Very much more was read into them than the words would bear. They were mere answers to able and ingenious letters from Mrs. Leigh, whose statements and suggestions, under an attitude of unstudied frankness, were admirably calculated to fortify Mrs. Leigh's own weak points and to bewilder and confuse Lady Byron into very mistaken ideas. The only knowledge to be gained out of Lady Byron's incautious letters is the old but rarely learnt lesson of the extreme danger of communications with those who say what they do not mean and mean what they do not say. Let those who have never been duped by hypocrites throw the first stone at Lady Byron. But if anyone had to be stoned because letters of a dupe were dragged into publicity without her consent, and against either moral or legal right, it was remarkable that the brutalities of the press should have been lavished on the dupe alone. The illicit production of documents flourished with impunity. Lady Byron was made the scapegoat for the contraband trade in her own letters! It unfortunately

escaped the attention of her legal representatives that they had power to stop publication ; for it would have been well to inforce their power as an act of justice, especially as they were not yet prepared to publish an authentic statement of the real case. Partial truth commonly means total falsehood.

Of course Mrs. Leigh was not wholly an impostor and a hypocrite. Lady Byron's generous acknowledgements of personal care and kindness were in some measure applicable, but the letters she wrote under an illusory feeling in Mrs. Leigh's favour did not go to the heart of the greater question. Lady Byron had no personal evidence to give that would have been decisive. She knew not for certain what to believe. If she could not prove guilt, still less could Mrs. Leigh's innocence be proved by any amount of hope or doubt in Lady Byron. Lady Byron's letters amount to nothing in this respect. She could not abolish by wishing the irrevocable past of her sister-in-law. It would not, indeed, have been in her power to annihilate the evidence of that past. If all Lady Byron's papers were non-existent, other independent records would remain to prove that Mrs. Leigh was what she was, and that the fundamental event of her life was over before she and Lady Byron ever met. The course of time was reversed when Mrs. Leigh was regarded as re-endowed with virgin purity by glib imputations of perjury against Lady Byron ; as if the innocence of the one could be recovered through posterior crime attributed to the other ! And when it came to proofs of Lady Byron's crime, of course none were forthcoming—nothing but re-affirmation of Mrs. Leigh's holiness. Neither hypothesis was borne out by facts ; neither was relevant to the other, chronologically or by any of the essential conditions. But each of these crazy and unrelated phantoms was alternately produced by way of floating the other one about, and being itself in turn floated round in vacuous repetition.

One result of discrediting Lady Byron's word would have been to cancel many of the kind and just things

she said in Mrs. Leigh's favour, without affecting the darker parts of the history, which were fully established by more direct testimony. Lady Byron's detractors were most detrimental as allies.

In 1869–70, besides other obstacles which had nothing to do with the merits of the case, though they caused great inconvenience, the term of thirty years fixed by Lady Byron in 1850 stood in the way of reparation to her for ten years more. "Procrastinator's argument, 'wait a little, this is not the time,'"[1] still reigned for another decade before it could be displaced, though every remaining reason for silence might drop away. And as circumstances change in one way, the guardians of truth change in another. They grow old and cautious about facing trouble and odium, and repeat with more obstinacy than ever: "The time has not yet come!" And it never does come if they can keep it off. Blind silence becomes an end in itself—identified with their very being.

So the years slipped away; 1880 passed by, and Lady Byron's friends let the lies be. The seeming inertia of time, stealthy and secret, accumulated its latent surprises,[2] its reserve of forces and occasions for a clean sweep of darkness and impurity; but meanwhile truth lay low.

It has been said that "lies always come first in everything;"[3] and attract the imbecile by the law of universal vulgarity.[4] The blind see the unknown, the incredulous believe the false. "Few are they who look to the inside of things. . . . They are usually very different from what they seem. . . . Truth comes in the last, and very

[1] Sydney Smith on Bentham's "Book of Fallacies."

[2] "J'ai toujours remarqué que le temps faisait ses affaires sournoisement. Pendant des mois, il fait un travail souterrain qui se révèle tout à coup. Je conviens aussi qu'il y a d'autres mois où il se croise très réellement les bras comme s'il ne savait que faire" (X. Doudan to M. Verdet, 9 Octobre, 1861).

[3] Sir M. E. Grant Duff's abstract of Balthasar Gracian's maxims in "Miscellanies," etc., 1878.

[4] As Doudan once wrote: "La vulgarité est une forme de la sympathie avec le grand nombre."

late, limping along on the arm of Time." [1] History is evolved by spontaneous generation. Biography grows out of pamphlets having their origin in corporate rancour or pursuit of profit.

Misrepresentations were much more ephemeral before the invention of trimestrial reviews about a hundred years ago. Through those secret organisms the spirit of the nineteenth century was let loose in countless notorious articles against whoever was obnoxious to one of the trade brotherhoods of the age.

> "And ever at thy season be thou free
> To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow."

Ignoble travesties were exhibited to the public of Keats, the Byrons, O'Connell, Harriet Martineau, Sir Robert Peel, Chateaubriand,[2] Carlyle, Shelley, some of which finally prevailed with the foolish public. Some of the victims turned upon their revilers. As Peel put it: "Personal good-will could not coexist with the spirit in which those articles were written, or with the feelings they must naturally have excited." He was repelling the explanation of a Quarterly Reviewer who, after public and avowed vituperation of extreme virulence, wrote privately to profess lively personal good wishes for the friend whom he had just been rending. This impudent communication received the stern answer just quoted, the conclusion of which was that Sir Robert Peel "trusted there was nothing inconsistent with perfect civility in the expression of an earnest wish that the same principle which suggested the propriety of closing a written correspondence of seven and thirty

[1] Balthasar Gracian. The belated, limping Truth is similar to the Λιταί in the Iliad (see p. 110). Supplications are the daughters of heaven—lame, wrinkled, sidelong gazer and outrun by Judicial Blindness. But it is they who heal hereafter, and if men reject and refuse them, they appeal to the eternal spirit of equity and Nemesis.

[2] The ignominy of the base articles against Chateaubriand does not of course belong to the English press, and had at least the redeeming features both of some masterly appreciation and of being signed by the deadly hater who wrote them.

years might be extended to every other species of intercourse." [1]

A remarkable attempt was made quite late in the nineteenth century to brand Shelley with domestic infamy which cannot be left unnoticed in this place on account of the quarter from which it came, and because it was a strange counterpart to other maledictions by the same prophet. It was discovered in 1887 that Shelley had an incestuous passion for his sister Elizabeth. This amazing hypothesis was announced to the world "as a protest against the theory that moral conduct is uninfluenced by speculative opinions," and in order "to test the soundness of Shelley's moral principles by a reference to his relations with Elizabeth in 1811." [2] A more or less genuine letter of Shelley's, dated July 4th, 1811, was quoted as proof of the charge, but the authenticity and text of the letter are uncertain. Even about its sense there has been a conflict of interpretations. The luminary who thus brought forward an incestuous accusation against Shelley in connection with a *whole* sister was the editor of the "Quarterly Review," who in 1869–70 raised an accusation of deliberate wickedness against Lady Byron [3] for stating confidentially to a friend, then believed to be trustworthy, that part of her misery had originated in the guilt of a *half* sister! The infallible oracle of Church and State, who would not allow that "Manfred" could have any connection with Lord Byron's own theories and practice, considered that his own imputations against Shelley were confirmed by "Laon and Cythna" and "Rosalind and Helen." His later article was the condemnation of his former ones, and reciprocally. The best comment on all the sermons and statements for which he was responsible is the levity

[1] The Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel to the Right Hon. John Wilson Croker, January 15th, 1847.

[2] "Quarterly Review," vol. clxiv., No. 328, for April, 1887, pp. 290-293.

[3] Sir William Smith (1813-1893), editor of the above-mentioned from 1867 to 1893. He was told at the time by the "Saturday Review" that he had "raised an accusation of deliberate wickedness against Lady Byron which no person of common sense—laying the matter of good feeling aside—can for a moment entertain."

with which, after cursing the very mention of incest by the person whom it deeply affected, he appropriated the subject for his own use in the damnatory personalities which he called arguments against Shelley. It is not wonderful if Keats's avenger was an abomination to reviewers, who, he thought, " with some rare exceptions, are a most stupid and malignant race," turned critics " as a bankrupt thief turns thief-taker in despair." [1] More especially had the writer of " Adonais " exposed the founders of the " Quarterly Review " " in their venal good nature " and inexhaustible ruffianism. In vain did bullies prosper and " wantonly deface the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God." Shelley had risen, " dipped his pen in consuming fire for " the tribe of obscene birds, and not much was left of them besides the memory of his burning words.

By a striking coincidence Shelley's eloquence is strangely applicable to the rage and hate preached much later against Lady Byron by the idolaters of the " *faux maternel* "—of false sisterhood, false holiness, false godliness. If second sight had revealed her figure stoned like that of some indescribable ruffian because she had been upright, pure and noble, he could not have uttered a more direly fulfilled prophecy than can be found in his celebrated passage : " Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone ? Miserable man ! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God." Lady Byron was, of course, in no public sense distinguished ; her very name ought never to have become known to the many ; but relatively to her own little world her life was as heroic as many a larger existence in the great world of all. And as for her detractors, it is perfectly fair to hold that amongst them were to be found some of the meanest specimens of God's creatures.

Lady Byron's trust remained unexecuted, but there

[1] Shelley Society, " Adonais," 1886, p. 19.

was no rest from the hideous things written against her. The fall of Lord Byron's works into disrepute by no means silenced defamation of her—on the contrary. It was not for his sake that a bad character had been given to her after his death. She was most maligned by those who cared nothing about him personally. His greatest detractors extended their aversion to her. For many years the public have been in a condition of stolid indifference to both. There has been no demand for any kind of book about Lord Byron; but this has lowered the quality rather than diminished the quantity of the literature which obscures those memories. In all sorts of places vast accumulations of the least precious materials had been amassed—which were expected to grow into value, but destined to be unloaded upon an unresponsive market by impatient holders. Thus the fair was encumbered with voluminous mounds of books, which, if they contained anything at all, could only consist of what Lord Byron's own people would refuse to touch. The inheritance of the Byrons was in every way the prey of strangers, and it has been more and more ignored that Lord Byron's own descendants have some feelings or even rights in connection with the affairs of their own family. They cannot regard their concerns as a provision or a playground for press and public, publicists and publishers. There is an extreme point for personalities and misrepresentations, whether laudatory, damnatory or predatory. The time comes at last when some measure of truth preservation is forced upon the victims. The representatives of Lord and Lady Byron would have infinitely preferred the official action of trustees to their own personal agency, which is a work of pain, though of honour and duty.

Unfortunately the last of the trustees, Mr. Henry Allen Bathurst, died a few years ago. His fidelity and affection for Lady Byron never waned, but difficulties stood in the way till the very last years of his life, when his health and energy were running out. When he was gone, the pressure of responsibility descended with all its weight

on the present writer, whose most earnest wish was not to be driven personally soon to break silence on the fatal and unlucky subject of Lord Byron's private adventures. The public were more than willing to hear no more of them, and it seemed that poachers might consider Byron ground hardly worth their visits. Truth could then still for a time sleep in the shade, and the Byrons wait without hurry for that fuller peace which cannot stand secure on impenitent falsehood and persistent injustice.

Careful, scrupulous, and not unduly deferred execution of Lady Byron's trust was imperative on her representatives. An interval of quiet expectation and reflection was reasonable, and it would have been well if for so long there could have been a general holiday from Byronese shows, hysteria and farce. It should have been plain to the most vulgar intelligence that the low comedy of Byronese attitudes in Victorian costume was played out. Lord Byron was not a mendicant, and would have loathed and spurned Byronification by puffs, advertisements and mendicity.

Manœuvres and hostilities were not as was hoped abandoned. Strange invaders reappeared, intent upon campaigns—futile and unprovoked, but sufficient to splash " a noteless blot on a remembered name." Statements and personalities of an unusual description were circulated, which the Byrons must absolutely repudiate and condemn, and that in the most and indeed only effectual manner—by plain truth and tangible evidence—practical exposure of pseudo-Byronese manipulations and fables. Outlaws from all the accepted courtesies and usages even of press manners and customs, like Lady Byron and her family, have no assent to give to final and absolute decrees of falsehood. The unpopularity of disestablishing favourite delusions has no terrors for those who are already misrepresented.

Full and final truth about the past and the dead is unattainable and inconceivable except by " a mind in a state of consciousness in which all phenomena are simul-

taneously instead of successively presented";[1] but "the first of all gospels is that a lie cannot endure for ever."[2] "Lies exist only to be extinguished"[2] by those oppressed. There is no reason to-day for endurance of the lies about the Byrons that would not equally be a reason on every other day for all time. All Lady Byron's original motives for silence have long ceased to affect any one. Lord Byron and his loves and hates are phantoms that haunt not the twentieth century. No one will catch any moral epidemic from him. The holiness of family ties can no longer be sullied by the witchcraft of Manfred and Astarte.

[1] Mansel, "Letters, Lectures and Reviews," p. 119. Gladstone once said to the Hon. L. Tollemache: "I will give you something to think over—*Have time and space any existence outside the human intelligence?*" ("Talks with Mr. Gladstone," p. 82).

[2] Carlyle, "French Revolution."

CHAPTER VIII

"WHEN WE DEAD AWAKE"

"Facta est super me manus Domini, et eduxit me in spiritu Domini: et dimisit me in medio campi, qui erat plenus ossibus: . . . Et dixit ad me: Fili hominis putasne vivent ossa ista? Et dixi: Domine Deus, tu nosti. Et dixit ad me: Vaticinare de ossibus istis: et dices eis: Ossa arida audite verbum Domini. Haec dicit Dominus Deus ossibus his: Ecce ego intromittam in vos spiritum, et vivetis. . . . Et prophetavi sicut praeceperat mihi: et ingressus est in ea spiritus, et vixerunt: steteruntque super pedes suos exercitus grandis nimis valde."

"I was dead for many years. They came and bound me fast and sunk me down in a vault with barred windows and muffled walls,—so that no one on the earth above could hear the cries from my tomb. But now I half begin to rise up from the dead." "It is when we dead awake, that we first see what is irreparable —what we have never had—our life."

"Seems she not like resurrection personified?" [1]

THE dead Byrons wake to reveal themselves. The posthumous phantoms of three tragic figures will tell of wasted lives, wasted loves, the tangle of strife and suffering which for them made up existence. They stand up—"distinct but distant"—in the "moonlight of other days"—as living and yet unfathomable as any of the innumerable host of dead whose ghosts speak in a few fragments of hieroglyph. The history of the three Byrons is summed up in some words of the Norse wizard, as, "Empty dreams—idle dead dreams." The love that

[1] "Jeg var død i mange år. De kom og bandt mig. Snørte armene sammen på ryggen.—Så sænkte de mig ned i et gravkammer med jernstænger for lugen. Og med polstrede vægge,—så ingen ovenover på jorden kunde høre gravskrigene—. Men nu begynder jeg så halvvejs at stå op fra de døde."

"Det uopettelige sér vi først,— . . . når vi døde vågner, . . . Vi sér, at vi aldrig har levet."

"Sér hun ikke ud som den levendegjorte opstandelse?" (Henrik Ibsen "Når vi dø de vågner").

blossoms in earthly life—the beautiful, wonderful riddle of life upon earth—that love perished [1] in all of them together with the blending of their lives—with no possible resurrection. The separation of each from all was consciously and verily for all life and time.[2] Their resurrection is that of the irreparable.

Bringing the dead Byrons into undistorted vision ought to be a work of compression. True history is necessarily a fragment, and of that fragment all is not wanted. It is selection that constitutes a clear and faithful picture. In the choice of materials it has been thought right to exclude from this book mere amplifications of documentary evidence—to concentrate attention on the dominating points. This is not an attempt to amuse, but a struggle for honour and life, for resurrection. During several years there has been long and full consideration, and many consultations with all those sufficiently conversant with the facts. Candid criticisms have left in existence little of the first form of this fragment, which has undergone two or three transformations from end to end. If friends could only help to rewrite as well as condemn what is submitted to them, the ultimate result might be better. Unfortunately, removal of rubbish is only the beginning of reconstruction—and of something like despair to an unskilled hand, who cannot make the work what it should be, but must carry it through without indefinite delay over a vain pursuit of perfection.

The highest authority consulted did not give and could not be asked for any purely literary advice, but frankly and fully gave his opinion of the effect of the evidence and its treatment from a strictly judicial and ethical point of view. Sir Leslie Stephen, K.C.B., as he presently became, authorized a statement in this place, that he had long rejected the hypothesis to which he once gave some

[1] "Tom de drømme. Ørkesløse—døde drømme. Vort samliv har ingen opstandelse efter sig." "Den kærlighed, som er jordlivets,—det dejlige, vidunderlige jordlivs,—de gådefulde jordlivs,—den er død i os begge" ("Når vi døde vågner").

[2] "Manfred: Say, shall we meet again? Phantom: Farewell!"

support, viz., of resentment and illusion in Lady Byron which developed into false charges against Mrs. Leigh. Sir Leslie Stephen also most kindly permitted full reference to his important communications and correspondence on this subject, beginning in 1887. The only claim upon his attention was that at an early period of his labour at the "Dictionary of National Biography," he had followed others and been persuaded into belief of the surmise that "Lady Byron had become jealous of Byron's public and pointed expressions of love for his sister, contrasted so forcibly with his utterances about his wife, and brooding over her wrongs had developed the hateful suspicions communicated to Mrs. Stowe, and, as it seems, to others." It might have been hoped that he at least would from the first have considered the matter to be still unsettled, and judged that, on the one hand, Lady Byron's real opinion of Mrs. Leigh required to be known by less meagre evidence than a few letters selected for show by Mrs. Leigh herself, and, on the other hand, that Mrs. Stowe's narrative, made on the strength of a recollection of Lady Byron's statement thirteen years before, might be inaccurate on important points. A reserve of judgement on Lady Byron would have been the natural attitude for the great and just national biographer. Extreme unwillingness to believe in the possibility of such facts as verily had existed may have made reading and writing about Lord Byron distasteful, but one might sooner have expected from Sir Leslie Stephen total avoidance of the subject than a half-hearted search in matters mentioned at all. In a serious work of reference nothing but rigorously proved fact need be included. Conjectures, and more particularly edifying conjectures that appeal to sentiment, are worse than useless unless verified. It has been said that "with ordinary minds, such as much the greatest part of the world are, 'tis the *suitableness*, not the *evidence* of a truth that makes it assented to." [1]

Had they been attended to, plenty of proofs existed in

[1] Dr. South.

Lord Byron's own poems of April, May, and July, 1816, and it was even admitted in the most fulsome puffs of Mrs. Leigh in 1869–70, that the so-called "hateful suspicions" already existed as widespread reports long before they could have developed inside Lady Byron's mind in the manner suggested. Sir Leslie Stephen's language about Lady Byron was measured, but his condemnation of her was in substantial accordance with the views of men whose epileptic violence, bad taste and vulgarity were utterly foreign to him. He did not himself consider that very deep moral infamy was inherent to his "hypothesis of illusion," and of course no one has a right to put into his words any meaning inconsistent with his own interpretation. His sanction of the charges against Lady Byron seemed serious and far-reaching enough to render a personal appeal not altogether inappropriate, except for the amount of trouble inflicted on him and most liberally undertaken. There are few in any rank or quarter who could or would have done what he did, who have his insight and impartiality when seriously at work, or to whom it would have been safe to offer unlimited confidence. More accurate knowledge of the facts was given to Sir Leslie Stephen in 1887—too late for correction of his article. He completely altered his views and wrote his opinion [1] that the papers shown to him "entirely refute the hypothesis of such an illusion as I had suggested. They prove that Lady Byron's conduct was thoroughly honourable, that it was dictated by conscientious motives, and by convictions not due to resentment or illusion." Since then a long time has elapsed, but there has been no fitting opportunity for making known to the public Sir Leslie Stephen's definitive opinion, though that was always considered desirable. In 1900, in consequence of his former examination of private documents, Sir Leslie Stephen kindly undertook to look at a large collection of important documents (including those in the present volume), together with a first draft for "Astarte." It was submitted to him that the Byron

[1] December 18th, 1887.

family felt themselves obliged on every ground of self-respect and honesty to vindicate Lady Byron's conduct by destroying the tissue of falsehood woven and still weaving about their house. They wished to know Sir Leslie Stephen's wishes concerning reference to the correspondence with him, and whether he had any further remarks to make.

It must first be stated distinctly that after giving full consideration to the whole subject, he felt that if he had had to decide on the propriety of publishing at all, he would have leaned to answer that fundamental question in the negative. If Lady Byron had not been concerned, he would have been very sorry to see any revelation made, and even the necessity of making it for her sake seemed to him to be a painful one.

However, he drew up an outline of the form of a possible brief statement of the case in case it should be so decided. Five propositions were suggested by Sir Leslie Stephen, and as it would be impossible to improve upon them much, they shall now be given with a few additions and modifications as a summary of the case, which will be established beyond dispute by documentary evidence in the second part of "Astarte." [1]

1. Lady Byron believed from the first the story of the connection with Mrs. Leigh, though she was always striving to disbelieve it during her residence with Lord Byron, and for most at least of that time persuaded herself that she did not believe it.

2. She believed it on grounds which satisfied Lushington, her legal adviser, and other competent persons. At the same time they all advised her that while the proofs and impressions were such as left no doubt on her mind, they were decidedly not such as could have been brought forward to establish a charge of that nature—should the facts be boldly denied—and she be challenged to bring forward the grounds of the imputation.

3. Her friendly intercourse with Mrs. Leigh (which has been the great argument against her early belief in the

[1] Now Chapters I. to V.—See Introduction, p. vi.

story) was approved by her friends, who took care to place on record the reasons for her behaviour.

4. She was not certain at the time (nor is it now certain) that the connection had lasted after her marriage, and she believed Mrs. Leigh to have been desirous of promoting her happiness during the marriage.

5. The grounds of her suspicion not only satisfied other people at the time, but were in fact justified. Mrs. Leigh admitted the facts afterwards, and Lady Byron endeavoured to influence her so as to make a renewal of the connection impossible.

Sir Leslie Stephen wrote : [1]

" These propositions and any others that might be desirable could be stated simply and straightforwardly. You would also say that you would give documents enough to place them beyond doubt, but would not give more than was necessary for that purpose.

" Such documents would be easily selected from the papers. The statement witnessed by her friends is conclusive for one point, and the letters from Lord Byron to Mrs. Leigh [and other correspondence of Mrs. Leigh's in 1819—L.] are conclusive for another.

" Now what I thought was that if these propositions were clearly proved, the essential case is made out, the fictions about Lady Byron would be completely confuted. A great deal of course would remain vague, but it would be impossible for anyone to suppose that Lady Byron invented the story afterwards, or was under an illusion. All such reasons would be cut down finally, and that seems to be the essential point. . . .

" I have, I confess, still a wish that the truth of the story could be left without explicit confirmation. I admit, however, that that would be difficult, because it would leave an opening for the supposition that Lady Byron had been hasty and over-suspicious, though not intentionally unfair.

" Anyhow, I have written all this, because I feel very

[1] April 9th, 1900, to the Earl of Lovelace.

strongly that you should make it perfectly clear that you published solely from a sense of obligation, and publish only as much as is necessary. My notion was that the scheme which I have suggested would make this clear.

. . .

"You have very strong reasons for defending Lady Byron. Moreover, there is much to be said for the opinion that even in regard to Lord Byron the truth should be known. I will not argue the point, but my view would be that if you deliberately decide that the facts should be known, nobody would have a right to complain. The point of casuistry cannot be settled by argument, but is finally matter of your own instinct and sense of justice."

These remarks define the actual position, and it only remains to be mentioned that Sir Leslie Stephen's advice has been followed by omitting hundreds of important and interesting documents, which would only have increased the mass of evidence and information without otherwise altering the case. These pages were of course not inspired by him, and do not claim to represent his views except where and so far as his own words are quoted; but none of the material facts contained in Lady Byron's papers were kept back from him, and nothing is now kept back that could affect the real ultimate judgement.

When the false maternal taint has been burnt out of the tragedy of Astarte, the whole of the mystery of the Byron story is dispelled. A structure of deception is inherently a greater evil than the most painful of revelations. The silences have been irrevocably broken. Nothing remains but to cut the ground from under the feet of those who would seek and perhaps manufacture some substitute for the truth, as easily and recklessly as the calumnies about Lady Byron were produced, if the truth were longer concealed. That there was some potent necessity for the separation was really put beyond a doubt by the well-known agreement of opinion between three such men as Sir Robert Wilmot Horton, Sir Francis

Doyle, and Dr. Lushington. The younger Sir Francis Doyle wrote an unanswerable page in his interesting "Recollections and Opinions," which clearly demonstrated that a separation on trivial grounds could not possibly have been forced through with the collusion of those three able and honourable men of the world. *Some* obstacle to reunion of exceptional gravity must have been known to them to render possible such determined action as they took in combination with each other. All alternative explanations, graduating from murder down to bigamy, are more heinous or repulsive than incest with a half-sister, the senior by four years, met again almost as a stranger after many years' absence without correspondence. His memory has less than nothing to gain from all the possible degrading and disgusting suppositions that might be invented and decoy prospective purchasers, in the event of a high tide of Byronese folly, curiosity and ill-nature. There were many baseless reports in 1816, and Mrs. Leigh, for obvious reasons, gave very faint discouragement to those which diverted attention from herself. She almost suggested, on one occasion, a comparison between her brother and Lord Ferrers, faintly affecting a hope that the mystery might not be that![1] An obvious subterfuge, for, had she really thought Lord Byron in danger of being tried for his life, even to save herself she could hardly have given a hint like a common informer. It is right to state most distinctly that the separation papers leave no possible place for other charges besides the two commonplace ones of adultery and cruelty, and that connected with Mrs. Leigh. Many reports of other matters were circulated by Lord Byron's enemies in 1816, and were not altogether displeasing to Mrs. Leigh, though entirely discredited by Lady Byron's papers.

The exposure of a melancholy and wicked conspiracy against Lady Byron's character does not involve un-

[1] [The fourth Earl Ferrers had been hanged for murder. My grandmother used to say that, as a privilege accorded to his rank, it was with a silken rope.—Ed.]

qualified eulogy. If records and witnesses are to be believed, she acted well and nobly in all that related to her separation, except that perhaps she need not have fastened the door so irrevocably against all possibility of reconciliation in a remote future. She felt herself that had there been one person less amongst the living, she "might have had duties, however steeped in sorrow." It is true that the end would have been the same. That third person long survived Lord Byron, thus *de facto* and *de jure* keeping him asunder from his wife, even supposing, which is by no means established, that he was ever serious about wishing to return to Lady Byron, the parting having been quite as much his act as hers.

No one ever admired the genius of Byron more than she, though the spell of his power no longer held her. His creations still were a spectacle of exceeding beauty, —distant, but seductive and dangerous. All the splendours of the world seemed to her now but a mystery of wickedness. She found rest and serenity in a sanctuary of renunciation; and averted her gaze from the tangle of human adventure, judged after one desperate outlaw. Her youth was a sacrifice, and she was prepared for a universal abolition of youth by edict. She almost persuaded herself into views worthy of the old thoroughgoing divines who thought to extinguish corporeality and bring the world to an end.[1]

[1] "L'enseignement ecclésiastique a un inconvénient: un bon prêtre vous prend affectueusement par les deux mains le dos tourné au monde, et il vous dit: 'Mon cher enfant, ne regardez pas derrière vous; c'est un spectacle très séduisant, mais très dangereux; à première vue, c'est plus beau que tout, et l'on croirait que c'est Dieu même qui a fait ces merveilles apparentes (ne vous retournez donc pas, mon enfant, quand je vous parle); c'est l'œuvre du diable, mais d'un coloris si trompeur! (Voilà encore que vous vous retournez!)'

* * *

"La morale de tout cela, c'est qu'on n'a goût à ce qui dure que quand on a éprouvé le peu de valeur de ce qui passe. J'ai vu à Cologne, sur un autel, des colliers, des bracelets, des couronnes que de grandes princesses étaient venues déposer là dans leurs soucis. Qu'est-ce à dire, sinon qu'elles avaient vu toutes les splendeurs du monde et qu'elles ne valaient pas la sombre sérénité du temple? Encore faut il avoir porté ces rubis, ces émeraudes, pour savoir qu'il arrive un moment où les yeux n'y prennent plus de plaisir.

"Si vous ne lisez pas la vie de lord Byron, vous ne saurez pas bien que de beaux chevaux, au grand génie poétique, l'art de tuer au pistolet une mouche à

This would not be the place to attempt an account of Lady Byron's character, but it is no duty of piety and affection to deny that there were in her some grave and even disastrous deficiencies, of which she was not unconscious towards the close, when she looked back upon her life, and was waiting for death. There was nothing fundamentally evil in her defects; they were like the inversions of virtues, but not the less dangerous for that, and charged with potential destruction for her own welfare and the happiness of others. Her peculiar position isolated her from that contact with her own equals which might have checked the progress of undesirable mental and moral tendencies. She ought to have made the effort—a painful one—to keep her place in society, whereby, not impossibly, she might have preserved better, even bodily health, and still more, soundness of judgement, happiness for herself and for all who depended upon her. In her absence "that great blockhead the world" was fatly prejudiced against her. Her unconcealed contempt for ambition, popularity, success and fashion of itself made her an object of suspicion to all classes of English opinion. The ground was ready for ridicule, insult and the vilest delations. Unknown, and therefore odious, she was condemned unheard by the united suffrage of the meanest and the highest, by the select respectabilities, and the whole scum and weeds of England. About the middle of the nineteenth century, most preposterous accounts of her were circulated; and they were credited not merely by chimney-sweeps, but also by fastidious lords and ladies. Had she been there, such fables would have been extinguished without thought or effort by a palpable reality.

On June 20th, 1815, Ticknor wrote of her:

"While I was there Lady Byron came in. She is pretty, not beautiful—for the prevalent expression of her countenance is that of ingenuousness. . . . She

vingt pas, les grands yeux de la Fornarina, les forêts qui pendent sur la vallée de Lacédémone, toutes les recherches de la civilisation, et tous les plaisirs de la vie sauvage, laissent un grand ennui au fond de l'âme. Faites venir alors saint Thomas d'Aquin" (X. Doudan to M. Raulin, 6 Septembre, 1843).

ANNE ISABELLA MILBANKE IN HER TWENTIETH YEAR

After a Miniature by George Hayter (1812)

. . . is rich in intellectual endowments, . . . possesses common accomplishments in an uncommon degree, and adds to all this a sweet temper."

"June 23rd, 1815. I went by appointment to see Lord Byron. He was busy when I first went in, and I found Lady Byron alone. She did not seem so pretty to me as she did the other day; but what she may have lost in regular beauty she made up in variety and expression of countenance during the conversation. She is diffident,—she is very young, not more, I think, than nineteen—but is obviously possessed of talent, and did not talk at all for display. For the quarter of an hour during which I was with her, she talked upon a considerable variety of subjects—America, of which she seemed to know considerable; of France, and Greece, with something of her husband's visit there,—and spoke of all with a justness and a light good humour that would have struck me even in one of whom I had heard nothing."

"June 26th, 1815. I again met Lady Byron, and had a very pleasant conversation with her until her carriage came. . . . [Mrs. Siddons] formed a singular figure by Lady Byron, who sat by her side, all grace and delicacy,[1] and this showed Mrs. Siddons's masculine powers in the stronger light of comparison and contrast."

Ticknor finally[2] saw Lady Byron in her husband's box at Drury Lane, June 27th, 1815, when he wrote:

"Lady Byron more interesting than I have yet seen her."

Ticknor wrote [later] of Lady Byron (July 14th, 1835):

"The upper part of her face is still fresh and young; the lower part bears strong marks of suffering and sorrow. Her whole manner is very gentle and quiet,—not reserved, but retiring,—and there are sure indications in it of deep feeling. She is much interested in doing good, and seemed anxious about a school she has established, to

[1] [I must record here that the portrait by J. Ramsay named "Lady Byron" in the "Letters and Journals of Lord Byron," Vol. iv., p. 66, which is far from depicting a person "all grace and delicacy," is a spurious one. See Note II., p. 318.—Ed.]

[2] [*I.e.*, for the last time before the separation.—Ed.]

support, as well as educate, a number of poor boys, so as to fit them to be teachers. She talked well, and once or twice was amused, and laughed; but it was plain that she has little tendency to gaiety. . . . Her whole appearance and conversation gratified me very much, it was so entirely suited to her singular position in the world."

Mary Clarke (afterwards Madame Mohl), after seeing Lady Byron, July 23rd, 1838, thought her prim, refined, observant, devout, honest, respectable, fond of information, not the least pretty, clever or amusing, but not exactly stupid.

In remarkable contrast to this depreciation is Sir William Molesworth's impression in 1833. He liked her much: "she is a calm, dignified and certainly very clever person; expresses herself remarkably well and clearly, rather stern in manners. We got on very well, as she is almost a Radical, and we talked on education."

She was observed with much curiosity at Count Molé's reception in the Académie Française, December 30th, 1840. Chateaubriand was there to support his old friend Molé, saw Lady Byron, and thought she looked as if she had "pas assez de songes."

One of her defects was a want of suppleness; "any argument founded on expediency causes her to take a decidedly opposite course." [1] She was not enough of a politician, too much absorbed in high and stoical ideals for herself and others. After the separation, this took the form of saying and acting: "Happiness no longer enters into my views." She too completely gave up all that was congenial to youth,—"to bear and expiate a past which was not hers." [2] She renounced the world of enjoyment, like the founder of a severe monastic order, and would have forced everyone under her power to live a life of Spartan self-denial, and devotion to a somewhat despotic philanthropy. Her ideal was like that of Pascal, whom she particularly admired, in his renunciation of the world. The devil she *said* she did not believe in,

[1] From a letter of 1853.
[2] R. L. Stevenson, "Olalla."

but under dislike of the name, the thing afterwards defined by Huxley as the primacy of Satan, became to her also virtually ever present. Her horror of the flesh was almost excessive. For the government of the young she adopted a system of coercion, which, amongst other drawbacks, was self-destructive in its extreme severity. She did not absolutely insist on cutting off all the pleasures of life from girls, who are comparatively submissive to family, chastity and law. But boys were to be held without respite under restraint, deprived of the appropriate amusements for their time of life, condemned to the society of the old and wise; lest they should be tempted to drink, gambling, and, above all, women. She thought early profligacy more natural and even more fatal to a man than to a woman, and held rightly enough that the male reprobate is sure to end in an ignominious old age. The force of this idea—exceeding dread of vices the effects of which she had witnessed—took away from her all sense of proportion of means to end. In her extreme desire to stamp out vice and inforce asceticism, she was not unlike the holy pontiff, Pius V, stated by a chronicler to have been so occupied in re-establishing and improving "his admirable inquisition"[1] that the concerns of the people went to ruin. So Lady Byron wasted energy on useless, abortive, or mischievous schemes and illusions—co-operation, education, phrenology, juvenile delinquents—and missed the good she might have done within her own natural circle.[2] She

[1] "Ce saint pape, tout occupé, comme on sait, de sa juste haine contre l'hérésie et du rétablissement de son admirable inquisition, n'eut que du mépris pour l'administration temporelle de son État" (Stendhal, "Les Cenci," "traduction du récit contemporain; il est en *italien de Rome*, et fut écrit le 14 septembre, 1599").

[2] [An old friend, Mr. H. de Fellenberg Montgomery, who had lived from boyhood in closest intimacy with Lady Byron and her family, writes the following protest:—

"Lady Byron took a very important part in many movements for the benefit of the people, and I believe that if the secret about her and Mrs. Leigh had not been a bar to any life of her appearing shortly after her death, there would probably have been a record published, and very properly, of her work during the last forty years of her life, and her correspondence with many distinguished men of that period. . . . It is much to be regretted that circumstances made

seemed almost insensible to the ridiculous side of the Utopia she dreamed of; unconscious of the dreariness and futility of the world if transformed into a reformatory by educational philanthropists, or a paradise for Unitarian Saints.[1]

The illusion of absolute Spiritualism, the impossibilities of universal Altruism, were for her a refuge from the hypocrisy and injustice of the world. Her circumstances had trained her to a heroism of indignation against public or private wrong; whilst she struck at least one good observer as by nature "a woman capable of profound and fervid enthusiasm, with a mind of rather a romantic and visionary order."[2] Before her twenty-fourth birthday she had nothing more to learn of the sway of misery and guilt. Her own visions and romance were judged and ended. She was left to stern contemplation of the surrounding system—softened by intense pity for the wretched.

Church and State were under a dead weight of oppression tempered by the brutality of the rabble. A spirit of revolt was in her as much as it ever was in Lord Byron. She abjured the frivolous despotism of society, civil coercion, bloodthirsty mobs, persecuting Protestantism, greasy Methodism, the Judaic incubus. Vindictive repression even of crime seemed hateful to her. She could see no distinct boundary line between constables and outlaws. Some outcasts were wicked and dangerous

such a memoir impossible at the time. . . . I regret that 'grave and disastrous deficiencies' should be attributed to her, or that her conduct in turning her back on a society which was mainly occupied in amusing itself, in order to try and relieve the distresses of the poor (which in those days were great and grievous) was altogether a mistake, and not rather a merit. My grandfather Fellenberg [Emmanuel de Fellenberg of Berne, the great educationalist.—Ed.] wrote for publication, under the lithograph of his portrait, the following words:—

"'Den Reichen gebricht es selten an Hülfe
Stehe du den Armen und Verlassenen bei.'"—Ed.]

[1] "En présence d'un relâchement moral comme celui dont nous sommes les témoins, on se figure volontiers que l'œuvre de la réforme sociale consisterait à donner au monde un peu d'honnêteté." . . . "S'il n'est pas le fondateur, Channing est vraiment le *saint* des unitaires." . . . "Le moindre inconvénient du monde de Channing serait qu'on y mourrait d'ennui" (Renan, "Études d'Histoire Religieuse").

[2] "Records of a Girlhood," by Frances Anne Kemble, i. 212.

more by training than nature, and might once have been saved, or yet be reclaimed. Her theory of the unreality of evil was not very consistent with ascetic rigour. She persuaded herself that man habitually falsified himself by seeming bad, like assuming a disguise, and that goodness was human nature stripped of its disguise and seen absolutely as it is. Perversion was an illusion. Duty and self-denial were (with a little assistance and education) the natural mode of being of almost everyone. All the kindred absolutisms, religious, political, social, or personal, were alike repugnant to her; and she was disposed to love all who like herself were calumniated and oppressed—Catholics, Negro slaves, the poor Irish goaded into rebellion,[1] heretics like the Unitarians, against whom every hand was raised. She was attracted towards Channing by the mild and tolerant spirit of his generation of American Unitarians. But she could no more have found room for herself in the mean and frigid halting-place of Unitarianism, than she would have been drawn into the time-honoured fane of Catholicity—so mysterious in its spacious grandeur without apparent solidity.[2] Many of the sectaries would have liked to make a good heretic of her, but in this they were bound to fail. She was impervious to dogmas of faith, orthodox or heretical, Protestant or Popish. The way to Rome was impenetrably closed to her, but she was a very bad Protestant.[3] She rejoiced over any one who

[1] Lady Byron's antipathy to the dominating system of Church and State in Ireland was inherited from her mother, Judith Milbanke, who had written to Mary Noel (an aunt), May 24th, 1797: "certainly Ireland is at present a very horrible place to be in. . . . I observe parties of Seddon's regiment are often ordered out to quell the poor oppressed Irish, who are driven desperate, and now must be subdued at all Events." In 1843, during the O'Connell prosecution, Lady Byron heartily desired a change in the Irish Church arrangements, and looked forward with hope to a virtual Repeal of the Union.

[2] Renan has somewhere compared the cathedral of his native Tréguier—marvel of lightness, with forest-like nave massed over void, foolhardy attempt to realize in granite an impossible ideal—to the Catholic Church in its barbaric vastness, strange witchcraft and beauty—and want of solidity. I cannot find the passage, but take another description of the great stone book of his infancy from the "Souvenirs."

[3] Like Lord Ampthill, who was thought so charming at the Vatican that some true believer asked Pius IX whether he might not be on the way to be a

stood out against worldly inducements and even family influence to " work out the will of his conscience."

A son of some lifelong friends changed his religion and sacrificed a good income in 1850. She wrote : " I always regretted that —— did not become a Catholic.—His character would have been the better for it. The struggle to prevent it shortened his father's life— Had the step been resolutely taken, the struggle would have been precluded— . . . He is at least one who will never offer a prayer to Mammon— Should the time ever come when such a communication would be proper, pray say how much I honor him. . . . When all strife between the nearest Relatives is ended by final measures, the natural feelings flow forth again, for the cause of restraint is removed. It must be a great happiness to those who have ceased to be in a position of Antagonism."

Some years before that a young woman who was more than a daughter to her had taken the same step. Lady Olivia Acheson was the child of one of her dearest friends, Lady Gosford. Lady Byron's affection for both was very strong. On Lady Gosford's death, she took this much-loved Olivia more than ever to her heart. Lady Olivia went into charitable works and a convent at Birmingham, and in 1851 she was ill, and probably felt she was not long for this world. (She died in March, 1852, to the extreme grief of her adopted mother.) In June, 1851, Lady Byron went to Birmingham for a meeting which was to be the last, and on the 12th she wrote : " Olivia said to me—' I could not help thinking this morning how happy it would make me to see you a Catholic *before I die !* ' You will conceive that this was to be met by sympathy not opposition and with tenderness and gratitude. She cannot conceive Faith to exist *out of a collective body*—and because she sees me *alone*, she believes me without Faith. I reminded her how many of *her* Catholics had in their day stood alone—

Catholic. " He will never get there," said the Pope, " but you may be pleased to hear that he is a very bad Protestant,—*ma posso dirvi che è pessimo protestante.*"

what self-denial it required, what fidelity to God,—not to join in outward as well as in inward communion with the beloved, and I felt it at that moment.—"

Lady Byron was, during her visit to Birmingham, introduced to John Henry Newman, whose impression was stated to be that she would never come to his religion. There was a secret antagonism between them, because she thought he encouraged Lady Olivia to go out against Dr. Bence Jones's injunctions. In those days doctors dreaded fresh air for her malady, which was consumption. Lady Byron remarked that, phrenologically, Newman's veneration was excessive, logic and benevolence wanting. She had quite as much aversion as he for the popular Protestantism of that time, in other words, the dogmatism of the uninformed, the alliance of fanaticism with vulgarity.[1] She wished for no penal laws to suppress old beliefs or young enthusiasms, but impartial liberty for all, even for the enemies of liberty. Like Renan she held that the iniquities and absurdities of spiritual potentates or demagogues would become harmless with equal law—the unfailing sterilizer of the reciprocal rage and hate of Calvin and Philip the Second.[2] No outcry for preventive statutes, royal supremacy or popular control of other people's religion got sympathy from her. What she applauded was the cry of free minds and large hearts: "Dream not that divine truth can be bought with the coin of human injury." She felt all the scorn of

[1] In a letter of Lady Byron's of 1842 I find the following quotation from a new book of Hallam's (he had compared the Reformation of the sixteenth century to the Revolutionary innovations starting from 1789):

"In each the characteristic features are a contempt for antiquity, a shifting of prejudices, *an inward sense of self-esteem leading to an assertion of private judgment in the most uninformed*, a sanguine confidence in the amelioration of human affairs, a fixing of the heart on great ends, with a comparative disregard of things intermediate."

"Le protestantisme partait d'une foi très absolue. Loin de correspondre à un affaiblissement du dogmatisme, la Réforme marque une renaissance de l'esprit chrétien le plus rigide" (Renan, "Les Apôtres," p. xli).

[2] "Si, au lieu de faire conduire Polyeucte au supplice, le magistrat romain l'eût renvoyé en souriant et en lui serrant amicalement la main, Polyeucte n'eût pas recommencé; peut-être même, sur ses vieux jours, eût-il ri de son escapade et fût-il devenu un homme de bons sens" (Renan, "Conférences d'Angleterre," p. 207).

James Martineau for "religious liberties held on no tenure of immutable justice, but only during theological good behaviour."[1] Pity for sufferers from extremes of cruelty—however long ago—and whether innocent or not, made her friendly even to those aliens in race and religion who are well able to take care of themselves—adepts at gain and retaliation.

"Wroth without cause—revenged without a wrong—

* * *

Racked by an idle lust of useless gold—

* * *

A people nationless—whom every land—
Receives to punish—& preserves to brand
Yet still enduring all—& all in vain—
The doomed inheritors of scorn & pain—
Untaught by sufferance—unreclaimed from ill—
Hating & hated—stubborn Israel still"[2]——

She was influenced by the worth of some individuals of the Jewish invasion, and would not think them guilty of the principles and practice of their own old books—books which more than anyone she considered to be the most pernicious popular reading. She was unwilling to discover the claim and boast by the present Jews of identity with the Jacobins of the Old Testament.[3]

[1] "No one thinks of insisting on humility of mind as a condition for the franchise, or denying the alderman's gown except to the shoulders of modest innocence; and as little can we make the temper of a Church the qualifying ground of its civil freedom." "Had this (the pretensions of Rome) been a secret twenty years ago [in 1829], the removal of Catholic disabilities would lose not only every noble, but every respectable feature; and would be degraded from an act of legislative rectitude to the level of a defeated bargain, or an extorted boon. But it was no secret: the repeated parliamentary debates, the protracted controversies between the established and the disabled communion, had long brought out every feature of the case; and nothing was done but with open eyes" (James Martineau in the "Westminster Review," January, 1851).

[2] From Lord Byron's manuscript (in Lady Byron's papers) of his fragment "Magdalen."

[3] "Moïse est un conventionnel parlant du haut de la Montagne" (James Darmesteter as quoted by M. Bourget in "L'Etape").

Both destructives and conservatives have found in the Bible what never was there, but it is more specious to classify Joel and Amos amongst the collectivists

Whilst decidedly alienated from the Old Testament, she was not unreservedly attached to the New, which with her hardly ranked above Tacitus, Dante, Pascal, Chateaubriand,[1] Wordsworth and Shakespeare. Christ was for her the Man of Sorrows, the Poet of the deathbed, who knew what was in man, and had compassion upon all. He was "the friend of all the distressed," who remained till the end, when Dante and Shakespeare were powerless to console. Her own brightest side showed itself to those who were in presence of trouble, pain, remorse, or death. She could give very great comfort, having deep feeling with self-command, ability to turn her own mind and other people's away from present scenes, from the darkness and dread of the last hour.

Wisdom about the conduct of life flowed too late into Lady Byron's mind. But she was capable of learning by experience and always candid. After looking back on many afflictions and some mistakes, she once wrote very late in her life to a friend:

"It has appeared to me from the consequences of many facts in my own and others' conduct, that all exaggerations of a good feeling are chastised with great severity. I believe I may say without exception that I have never been ill-used to any great extent, except by those for whom I had gone beyond the common limits of

than to convert Moses into the first Jacobin, thus condemning him to the company of "the first Whig."

The accounts of the age of the prophets are full of revolutionary crimes, such as the murder of Jezebel, recalling the massacres of September, or the butchery of the priests of Baal, like those of the Paris commune; and undoubtedly the Old Testament in the hands of demagogues since the Reformation has been used to instigate and excuse manifold atrocities. The subversive tendencies of parts of the Old Testament have been made the most of by Semitic agitators in their enmity to the invaded communities. It has been well said of some modern Jewish ideas that: "On y lisait le ressouvenir des persécutions et l'audace intellectuelle d'une race qui, ayant trop souffert, ayant trop connu les pires extremités du sort, ne tremble pas devant la perspective de bouleversements moins terribles que ses anciennes misères" ("L'Étape").

[1] Lady Byron was a special student of the newly-recovered authentic text of the "Pensées." She read with me in Latin the "Germania," and the first books of the "Annals." I well remember her exceptional interest in Chateaubriand—his tomb on the Grand Bé in the midst of his own sea—"cette patrie qui voyage avec nous," and the "Mémoires d'outre Tombe."

kindness. I have not quite made out the sequences by which such results can be accounted for. Perhaps the kindness directed to those channels was withdrawn from others which had a better right to it. I think it *was*, in one or two cases, but not in the majority. Perhaps the kindness itself was alloyed by some mixture of personal indulgence or self-complacency. Had it been purer, would it have brought bitter instead of pleasant fruits? And besides, I may suppose there was a want of adaptation in the benefits to the nature of the persons to be benefited, in other words, a want of judgment. Still the consequences have looked like a stern retribution. . . .

"What you have said concerning the exhaustion of *good* feelings by their effusion,[1] is not less true of *bad* feelings, and I therefore consider the latter as arrows spent when they have left the bow. It appears to me folly to act upon the supposition that because they were once aimed at me, they would still be aimed."

Never were words more applicable to Lord Byron (cf. p. 3).

The blend in Lady Byron of generosity, fortitude, sternness, gentleness, affection, altruism and implacability struck two men with amazement at a time of

[1] This was possibly inspired by a passage of Cardinal Newman's. I only know it as given in "Polonius" (Pickering, 1852, lxxi): "God has made us feel in order that we may go on to act in consequence of feeling. If, then, we allow our feelings to be excited without acting upon them, we do mischief to the moral system within us, just as we might spoil a watch or other piece of mechanism by playing with the wheels of it. We weaken the springs, and they cease to act truly. . . . For instance, we will say we have read again and again of the heroism of facing danger, and we have glowed with the thought of its nobleness; we have felt how great it is to bear pain and to submit to indignities rather than wound our conscience, and all this again and again when we had no opportunity of carrying our good feelings into practice. Now suppose at length we actually come to trial and let us say our feelings become roused, as often before, at the thought of boldly resisting temptations to cowardice. Shall we therefore do our duty, quitting ourselves like men? Rather, we are likely to talk loudly and then run from the danger—why? rather let us ask, why not? What is to keep us from yielding? Because we *feel* aright? Nay, we have again and again felt aright, and thought aright, without accustoming ourselves to act aright, and though there was an original connection in our minds between feeling and acting, there is none now; the wires within us, as they may be called, are loosened and weakened."

supreme sorrow and difficulty—one of whom wrote with the fidelity and attachment of thirty-seven years, the other with the concentrated bitterness of a rupture that was hardly Lady Byron's fault and not entirely his.

Lady Noel Byron had written to the Earl of Lovelace on January 4th, 1853:

"To you, Lovelace, I have been the most faithful of friends & at no time more actively & self-sacrificingly than in the last year & a half."

And in his answer of January 6th, 1853, were these remarkable words:

"And yet with all your severity and coldness which drives me into these indignant remonstrances with you, the last page of your letter is too true for me not to re-echo and confirm it. You have been too noble and generous (in some things) self-denying in all for me not to bear ready testimony to it. In most fine qualities you have not your equal on earth, and my love for you is as ardent as ever however you may repel it. I hold you in respect and admiration more than ever—but your want of sympathy (in spite of all your gentleness) with those who do not feel exactly as you do, has cruelly destroyed what of certainty hope & comfort remained to me."

Dr. Lushington had a few months earlier, during a very distressing period of illness and trouble—that of the last illness of Lady Byron's daughter—written of his friend of so many years:

"If there be a wonderful person in this world it is Lady NB: her energy of mind, her bodily exertions, the strength of her affection, the cool decision of her judgment, all increase instead of diminishing by the continued severity of the trial—I am in boundless admiration of her—of her heart, intellect and governed mind—Most brightly she shines in this dark shade of Affliction——"[1]

But the character and life of Lady Byron are not public property. She was condemned by a Pharisee

[1] The Rt. Hon. Stephen Lushington, D.C.L., to Frances Carr, September 2nd, 1852.

race with usurped jurisdiction. The false witness against her was not consciously or intentionally the work of her husband. Criminal use was made of his dreadful, but not wholly unnatural and insincere, words. The shame and the guilt belong to strangers who intervened without right and accused without cause.

CHAPTER IX

ADDITIONAL LETTERS[1]: FROM ANNE ISABELLA BYRON, AUGUSTA LEIGH AND THERESE VILLIERS

[WHEN after two months of uncertainty (January and February, 1816) the theory of Byron's madness was finally abandoned by the doctors, the full meaning of certain words and acts of his, which had hitherto been ignored by Lady Byron as being based upon insane illusions, had to be faced. Among other consequences a change in her relations with Mrs. Leigh became inevitable. The full story of this period will be found in Chapter III., p. 60, and onwards. It is there told how Mrs. Leigh's intimate friend, Mrs. Villiers,[2] pressed Lady Byron to discredit publicly the rumours then widely current about the guilty connection between Byron and Augusta, and how Lady Byron was compelled to explain her position fully to Mrs. Villiers.

The forty letters or portions of letters here given begin almost immediately after this explanation had taken place. They are printed in full so far as they are relevant to "Astarte," and the only omissions are passages of a purely domestic or temporary interest. They comprise the earlier portion (May to September, 1816) of a very long and voluminous correspondence. They show how—beginning with a resolution to break off all intercourse with Mrs. Leigh except such as might have to be feigned in public—Lady Byron quickly yielded to feelings of pity and sympathy for one who was in fact her fellow victim; how she welcomed with thankfulness Mrs. Leigh's asseverations that no actual guilt had taken place since

[1] See Introduction, pp. viii and ix.
[2] See p. 57, note 2.

Byron's marriage, and how finally she yielded to her longing to see and speak again with Augusta. The two women appear to have been irresistibly drawn to each other. They met in the early days of September, 1816, and the complete acknowledgment by Augusta of her guilt and Byron's, made verbally, was at once communicated by Lady Byron to Mrs. Villiers. From allusions in Lady Byron's memoranda to many things said by Augusta, it is evident that their conversations were long and detailed. It was an unburdening of hearts on both sides.

Augusta was made aware that Mrs. Villiers, hitherto the most determined champion of her supposed innocence, now knew all. A short period of embarrassment ensued between them. Mrs. Villiers' letter of September 15 to Lady Byron, and Mrs. Leigh's letter to Lady Byron on September 17 commenting on her words, show how this embarrassment was boldly ended by Mrs. Villiers and how Augusta acquiesced in her knowledge of the truth.

It was at this meeting in September that Augusta entered into the compact with Lady Byron under which for years she sent her Byron's letters to herself regularly as she received them, and undertook to act in all things regarding him by Lady Byron's advice.

For the next few years the correspondence between the sisters-in-law consists mainly of comments on these letters of Byron's, with anxious discussions of his possible return to England, and of the effect on the public of the more or less distinct allusions to Augusta in his published poems. A few phrases from some of the letters here printed were quoted by the author in Chapter III., and ten more letters of later date, with the passionate outburst from Byron (May 17, 1819) which occasioned them, will be found in Chapter IV.

Byron's own letters to Augusta and three to Lady Byron will be found in Chapter XI.

The italics in all these letters are those of the writer themselves. The notes are throughout mine.—Ed.]

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. VILLIERS.

Kirkby. May 6 1816.

Private.

My dear Mrs. Villiers, I have burnt your letter, which relieved me from some anxiety. I should have great consolation in thinking that A—— was more deluded than deceiving in the opinions she now declares—for, to me, duplicity is the most unpardonable crime—the only one that could alienate my kindness from her. Your argument that the Physician should know the whole of the Malady, would lead me to regret that a natural horror of the subject, and a feeling for her, had kept me so long silent to you—and even when I did speak, the only effect I meant to produce was that of inclining you to forgive whilst you lamented this *impression on my mind*, without at all convincing you of its justice. Nor do I now assert that it is in my power to convince you, though my own opinion is unalterable—but you shall receive any information by which you can be enabled to do her good. My great object, next to the Security of my Child, is, therefore, the restoration of her mind to that state which is religiously desirable. I differ from you in regard to the effects of an unequivocal communication. It is easier for the injured than the guilty to pardon, & I doubt if any woman would forgive to another such an avowal. I have sometimes thought that a tacit understanding existed between her and me —particularly when she believed *him* acquitted by Insanity, and seemed herself sinking under the most dreadful remorse—but her tone has since changed from penitence to pride. It is scarcely possible she could on various occasions have supposed me unconscious, unless that tenderness towards her which encreased my grief & compassion, rendered her blind to impressions that anyone, situated as I was, must have received—and I do not conceive that the repetition of his words to me in private, could make a change in her feelings, if what passed in her presence did not.

In regard to the promise—if there were such a previous condition she would attribute to it any subsequent kindness on my part—which would therefore lose every beneficial or consolatory effect to her—but I hope to reconcile & surmount these obstacles by some means—Perhaps no human power can create the spirit of humility and repentance which I pray God to bestow upon her—If you would do her good, you judge most wisely in appearing wholly unsuspicious—Let us not be impatient with a " mind diseased "—but wait to assist the effects of Time—Absence—and I hope—Solitude—for it is not whilst reflection is excluded by the engagements of Society, that moral principle can be revived—Nor do I think it can be forced upon the mind by sudden or violent means—Whatever may be the intermediate circumstances, it will be in her power to reclaim my friendship whenever it can *really* serve her for more than worldly purposes—to speak seriously as I feel, I regard this as a Christian duty—

There are parts of my conduct I wish to explain to you—particularly how I came to express satisfaction in her remaining in London during my first visit here—[1] though before I left it I had strongly advised her removal for her own sake. I had even told her what D[r] Baillie said, upon the presumption of Insanity, that *he* ought not to be left with ANY[2] young woman after my departure. My anxiety to prevent her continuing in the house was such, that I thought it my duty to confide to Mrs. Byron [3] *only*, the horrible desires he had entertained and gave her permission to communicate them to A— if absolutely necessary to save her from imprudence about him. I afterwards wrote to M[rs] B— from hence, saying that my apprehensions were relieved by Capt. B's residence in the house—A's letters to me here also weakened these impressions of *existing* danger,

[1] Lady Byron had gone to Kirkby in April of the preceding year to see her uncle, Lord Wentworth, on his deathbed.
[2] Underlined twice.
[3] Mrs. Sophia Byron, " Aunt Sophy."

which I was always struggling to repel. Still it was only when my enfeebled & distracted state of mind was worked upon by the representations of hazard to Lord B— if left alone, that I uttered those expressions, which almost all her letters were calculated to *extort*—& before I left this place, I decidedly expressed to her my conviction that those fears which were the *alledged* causes of her stay were groundless.

I will observe about Col. Leigh—but I wrote to him such a letter the first time I came here, as must have answered the effect I then intended, of preventing his suspicions, which could only do harm —

Say you have received this—& if its contents can be of any use, I will not regret the pain which every discussion of this topic costs me —

Believe me—very truly & affectionately yours

A I B

P.S.—My late maid's trunks, when opened in consequence of the execution, were found to contain divers stolen goods—so much for the respectable witness—!

THE HON. MRS. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

Thursday May 9th. [1816].

MY DEAR LADY BYRON

Your kind letter reached me very safely yesterday—and I sincerely thank you for it. Whatever steps you take towards the attainment of the objects you have in view will, I have no doubt, be right, & I can only again repeat that if I can in any degree contribute to either I shall at all times be most happy (&) ready to comply with your wishes—Nothing can be more amiable than all your feelings towards poor A. & I trust the time will come when she will fully appreciate them. Her fever has not yet subsided—and the wretched condition of her own affairs must and will for a time, prevent all retrospective recollections turning to good account. Her expressions of conscious innocence to me are certainly wonderful—but I think I can, under various pre-

tences, check intemperate language to all but myself, where it will do no harm. It is very good of you to enter into any details with me explanatory of your conduct—I feel I have no possible right to ask them—yet your confidence almost inclines me to risk being indiscreet. If I am so—send me no answer—but I feel so sure that you had a good reason for every action, that I wish if possible to be able to assign such to myself, as well as others, for *one thing*—namely—your having urged A. to come to town during your confinement.—This circumstance was mentioned to me by A. in consequence of her having heard both from the Wilmots and me that Ld. Byron had allowed himself to advance opinions publickly wh. could not but create the reports that had been circulated—& she says "if Ly. B. had ever heard such reports or if she had not treated them with the contempt they deserved, would she have invited me to come?" I confess I constantly used this argument myself while she was in Piccadilly & this makes me perhaps doubly anxious to be *set right* in this particular. Nothing could be more natural than your wish for her to remain a few days after you left town under all the circumstances you mention—Dr. Baillie's opinion was entirely suppressed to me—and so have many other things not unnaturally—tho' alas all this confirms the recent impression I have received.

The anecdote of your maid is *very satisfactory*—I never thought much faith shd. be given to her evidence but this ought to be known. Always believe me very affectionately yours

T. V.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

Kirkby. May 12. 1816.

My dear Mrs Villiers—I consider it as a very kind proof of your wish to do me justice that you desire to know my reasons, which I shall have real satisfaction in submitting to you—

It must be remembered that my *Conviction* was progressively formed, and not till lately fixed—and though my suspicion had been awakened very early, it was not at the period you allude to, sufficiently corroborated to have been made a principle of conduct without risking a cruel injury to one who professed herself most affectionately & disinterestedly devoted to my welfare. There was no medium—I must either have treated her as guilty or innocent—My *Instinct* too strongly dictated the former, but the *evidence then* rested chiefly on his words & manners, & her *otherwise* unaccountable assent & submission to both. If you regret that I did not attach more weight to my own wretched doubts, you will not dislike the feeling which rejected them as long as possible. Besides at the time of her return to Piccadilly, I conceived there was no danger to her from him, as his inclinations were most averse from her, & absorbed in another direction—and believing that the residence of any human being in the house would be the means of saving myself and my child, I had but her to look to, and was almost compelled to banish the ideas that would have deprived me of this last resource. Nevertheless before I allowed her to come, for she had many times offered it, I seriously urged her to reflect on the consequences that might ensue to herself. During her last visit my suspicions as to *previous* circumstances were most strongly corroborated—above all by *her* confessions & admissions when in a state of despair & distraction. They were of the most unequivocal nature possible, unless she had expressly named the subject of her remorse and horror. I have answered them in as pointed a manner—and have urged to her that *everything* was expiable by repentance, when she repeatedly said she had forfeited all hope of salvation—I must have had a heart of iron could I then have cast her off—No—she was only dearer to me, and I felt more bound to be the support of one whom I thought broken-hearted. I honor you—and love you for being her determined friend—it is the best privilege of an unblemished reputa-

tion to be kind to victims like her. Do not trouble yourself about her unjust language concerning me. If it had been my principal object to gain worldly opinion, you must be sensible that I should have acted differently throughout. Perhaps she does not feel towards me the anger she may think it *necessary* to show. You observe her *omissions*. It has appeared to me that all she has or has not said, has had so studied a reference to one consideration as to prove that it constantly occupied her thoughts.—Guilt has often betrayed itself by the endeavour to *make out a good case*—and I will venture to assert that her letters, if all produced together, would strongly tend to such an effect, by *providing against it*—When I tell you that Ld. B. made two, and I believe three of the worst women in London his confidantes on this subject, even in detail—and even on paper—you will not wonder at the report —I have been the means of silencing its principal *sources*. . . .

Ever yours affectly.
A. I. B.

I have written to thank Col. L—— for a letter apprizing me of the event [1] which you of course have heard.

THE HON. MRS. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

Saturday May 18th (1816).

You do me but justice, my dear Lady Byron, but you do it in the kindest manner, when you say that you believe it was from a wish to *do you* justice, & not from any motives of impertinent curiosity that I ventured to ask the question I did. Nothing I am sure can be more satisfactory to my mind than your answer—and if it were possible (which I hardly think) for you to stand higher in my estimation than you did before, it would be from the explanation you have so fully and kindly given me on the only point which still perplexed me. It

[1] Birth of Mrs. Leigh's son Frederick.

is a matter of great regret, (I will not say of reproach) to me to find how frequently I have been induced from A's partial statements, which I *believed* made with the most *unreserved* confidence, to give the very worst advice possible. She frequently wrote to me in the autumn stating your urgent requests to her to go to town, her alarm that things were not going on well, and that you thought she might be of use, Col. L's *humeur* at her going & asking my advice—her offers of going, & your admonitions to her to reflect on the consequences were suppressed—& I unequivocally advised her going, telling her that after all the kindness she had experienced from you she should not hesitate to make the only return in her power. In short it is useless now to go over the numerous instances where I now find I have been made accessory to her doing the very things she ought most to have avoided—all this cannot be recalled—the object must be now to reduce her tone again from pride to penitence—& to produce a change in her feelings for her own sake as well as for that of others.

I *fancy* that I now understand & read her mind upon this subject—I may be wrong—but I will give you my reasons—She frequently asserted to me in her letters when she first left town that she knew *the* reports originated in M. House [1] & were circulated by Ly. C. L.[2] I told her in reply that tho' what she said might be true, yet that Ld. B. had by his imprudent way of talking given ample grounds for such reports—She then expressed herself with great warmth—*assuring* me I had been misinformed, that whoever ventured to assert that he had so done spoke untruly, for that he had given her his solemn word of honor that he never had said anything that could give rise to any report of the kind, that she *must* believe his word, *could* not, *would* not believe him dishonourable, &c., &c. To all this I briefly replied that two years ago he had advanced at Holland House the most extraordinary theory upon such subjects, & that

[1] Melbourne House.
[2] Lady Caroline Lamb.

the person from whom I heard it was one whose veracity was undoubted—When she found I alluded to things said in general terms, & not any direct allusion to her, she softened—said it was a pity he wd. say such things that she had often remonstrated in vain—that he only said these things to surprise people & that his words did him more harm than his actions &c !—All this and many other things of the same sort lead me to believe that he did give his word of honor that he had never betrayed her to you or to anyone else, more than by such things as may have passed in her presence, which she may think do not after all amount to proof & might be set down to the score of his general cruelty to you—her submission & almost tacit acknowledgment at the moment I conceive to have arisen from her conviction of his insanity & consequent dread of his betraying her. Now I cannot but think that if she was told by some proper person, & perhaps no one could do this so properly as Mr. Wilmot, how completely he had committed her to you : if she could be told certain facts which could only be known to you thro' him & which perhaps *she* must *feel* to be true—if above all she could be made to believe the fact you mention in your letter of his having even betrayed her in writing to two or three women, surely nobody but *Calantha*[1] could remain infatuated after that—With such knowledge absence would essentially save her. Without it I cannot but foresee a probable evil—that from the state of their circumstances he may propose to her to go abroad to him, she may think it a better alternative than starvation (believing the world ignorant) & Col. L. is *quite* capable of acquiescing in it. You say she would never forgive you for such an avowal of your knowledge—but who is to suffer for her unforgiveness—not you—but her—& this she has sense enough to see after the first *entêtement* is over—& her affection for her children will I think prevent her attempting to make any resistance that shd. produce an *éclat* which must terminate in *her* ruin and *theirs*. I really feel

[1] Heroine of Lady Caroline Lamb's novel of "Glenarvon."

ashamed of the *quantity* I have written—nothing can excuse it but your extreme kindness & tenderness towards poor A. I do not believe she ever now alludes to her impression of your coldness to anyone but me, at least she tells me not—but I don't believe it would signify the least now. The general impression, as far as I am a judge, is so perfectly *now* what it should be—a very judicious letter of yours [1] which I have seen circulated respecting Ld. B.'s systematic cruelty has done much good, & even this most extraordinary production "Glenarvon" tends to do you justice in the eyes of the world—for nobody doubts the correctness of Glenarvon's character—Of course you have read it & did you ever read *such* a book ?

A. never told me of your promise to her about Georgy nor do I know now what it is—Pray tell me—Whatever it is I cannot but consider it a most extraordinary act of kindness.

Believe me my dear Lady Byron I most willingly give credit to whatever expressions of kindness & regard you are good enough to bestow upon me for few things can be so gratifying to me as in any degree to possess your affection or good opinion—& I am too anxious to retain them not to rejoice at your unchanging disposition—it is perhaps but a poor return though a very true one to tell you how sincerely I am ever affectionately yrs

T. V.

Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Villiers.

Kirkby. May 23. 1816.

My dear Mrs. Villiers—

I will first state my objections to the plan of a full & immediate communication—then tell you what will I think effect all the desired ends without risk of any sort——

"The fever has not yet subsided"—it is perhaps the crisis—and would you submit to one in a state of delirium or "infatuation" a point of conduct on which

[1] See postscript to Lady Byron's letter of May 23.

all the future welfare of that individual must depend
From all I learn of her present temper, no result bu
that of precipitate desperation can be expected. Sh
would defy accusation till she would *force* me to what
most deprecate—to countenance the report, and i
could afford me no satisfaction that the effects of he
imprudent resentment should recoil upon herself. A
short absence has been said to increase passion—a *lon*
one to exhaust it—and I think this peculiarly true o
dispositions like hers. Any compulsory attempt t
divide, has, with every one, the effect of attaching th
feelings more closely, but they may die away if not kep
alive by the presence of their object. I am decidedl
of opinion that *he* will not wish her to follow him—bu
were there such a probability, I would use *every* powe
to prevent it—Might she not be driven to this alterna
tive by finding her reputation here even more precarious
than she had imagined ?—*if* she does not know how fa
he has betrayed her, which I partly doubt from he
anticipations of the Report in a particular quarter, (a
I could show you in a letter of hers to me previous t
my father's proposal of a separation) and from what
have heard him say to her—I believe you read he
motives justly, and I fear that much of the despair
which I hoped to be the work of returning Conscience
arose from her dread of exposure.

The measure which I propose to take appears to me
to unite the following advantages—that it will make
herself acquainted with my real opinions & feelings
without binding me to avow them publicly, should she
be desperate in the first impulse—that it will neverthe-
less suspend this terror over her, to be used as her future
dispositions & conduct may render expedient—whilst
it leaves her the power of profiting by my forbearance
without compelling the utterly degrading confession o
her own guilt——

I intend then to write to her in substance as follows
[Lady Byron now gives a short *résumé* of her letter o
June 3rd to Mrs. Leigh which follows this one.—Ed.]

I wish to recur once more to my former letters of which she told you to justify her second visit. As I wrote to her upon condition she should burn, I am anxious not to avail myself of that circumstance to deny anything she might otherwise have shown in her defence—My letters certainly expressed both confidence & affection. The only reason for her visit that I dwelt upon was the possibility of preventing mischief to him —& were she conscious of a cause why *she* could not have that power, the whole ground of my receiving her was taken away—& she could not to herself assign any other. He had threatened to bring a mistress into the house during my confinement—and to this moment I believe he would, had she not been there—So that between his actual cruelty—and her seeming kindness I can scarcely say I had an option. One of the most singular circumstances was this: After his visit for a week to Six M.—[1] (Aug. 31) she wrote to me more than once saying she had things that might be very material to communicate to me—but would not trust them on paper. When she came, and I asked what they were—having been most anxious to see her for that reason as well as others, she made an embarrassed excuse, & had nothing to communicate.

As she had in the summer expressed anxiety about Georgiana's welfare in case of her death, I promised to give every care in my power to the welfare of her Child, in such an event. I then wrote to her that though I foresaw a time and circumstances when her feelings would be estranged from me, this promise would not be affected thereby. My pecuniary powers are now diminished—my intention, as I told you is the same—With regard to all this I wish to recall to your mind what I believe I told you—that my reasons might not convince others as perfectly as they convince myself, because—*I* have seen & heard, whilst others must depend not only upon my veracity, but in part on my discernment—and on this account should you hereafter

[1] Mrs. Leigh's house, Six Mile Bottom, near Newmarket.

form an opinion different from mine, I should not think it any injustice to me, unless you were to condemn me for a conviction *to myself* irresistible——

Yours affect[ly].

A. I. B.

P.S.—I will trouble you to communicate my letter to Mr. Wilmot [1]—He will tell you how he became *unavoidably* acquainted with my opinion, though it could not be deposited with one who deserved more entire confidence.

I say nothing of your kindness—nor of the length of my letter—believing that you will understand what I suppress.

I do not know what letter of mine can have been shown about, as I never wrote any on the subject that I did not mean to be private, though I have no doubt it was circulated with the kindest intentions.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON[BLE] MRS. LEIGH.

Monday June 3rd 1816.

My dear Augusta,

Before your Confinement I would not risk agitating you, but having the satisfaction of knowing you are recovered, I will no longer conceal from yourself that there are reasons founded on such circumstances in your conduct, as, (though thoroughly convinced there have existed) I am most anxious to bury in silence which indispensably impose on me the duty of *limiting* my intercourse with you—

I should more deeply lament this necessary consequence of causes,—(on the supposition of which whilst in any degree doubtful, it would have been unjust to act)—if your feelings towards me could give me the power of doing you any good,—but you have not disguised your resentment against those who have befriended me, and have countenanced the arts which have been employed to injure me—Can I then longer believe

[1] Robert Wilmot Horton, Lord Byron's cousin.

those professions of affection, and even of exclusive zeal for *my* welfare, which I have been most reluctant to mistrust ?—And on *this* ground my conduct, if known, would be amply & obviously justified to the world. I shall still not regret having loved and trusted you so entirely—May the blessing of a merciful God be with you & those nearest you—I am truly interested in the welfare of your children, and should your present unhappy dispositions be seriously changed, you will not then be deceived in considering me as one who will afford every service and consolation of your most faithful friend——

A. I. Byron.

Kirkby
June 3. 1816.

I attest this to be a true copy of a letter from Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh, sent according to date—

Ralph Noel.

Kirkby Mallory
June 3rd. 1816.

Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Geo. Villiers.

Endorsed :[1] June 4th 1816.

My dear Mrs. Villiers

Our present unanimity of opinion is a great comfort to me—I entertain no doubt whatever as to the propriety of the measure which I *have* taken according to your wishes, but not till my own mind was convinced they were most judicious—My Sincerity must atone for this uncomplimentary speech—I would send you a copy of my letter to her, but I may wish to say that I have not given one—By avoiding all ambiguity of meaning I have precluded the occasion for further explanation—yet, though I have expressed myself *thoroughly convinced*, and that *no doubt remains* of the existence of these circumstances, I have said everything that could soften the blow—every thing that I truly feel—Notwithstanding

[1] Apparently by Mrs. Villiers. Where necessary all Lady Byron's letters to Mrs. Villiers were thus endorsed.

the hope of cure, I could not inflict this wound withou
a degree of pain, the dread of which had perhaps before
swayed my reason against your arguments—I think her
first feeling will be terror—her second pride—& under
what influence she may reply I cannot conjecture—It is
dreadful to remember that this disease of her mind has
been increasing constantly since 1813—

I am going on Saturday to Lowestoffe in Suffolk, for
sea-air, which is quite necessary to me, as I feel more
weakness now than during my greater exertions—
Sleepless nights, and head-achy days—I take my Child
—It is stouter and stronger than any boy or girl of a
year old that I ever saw, and so goodhumoured that it
will be a very agreeable companion.

Will you think of *Lowestoffe?*—Besides the subject
of our mutual interest I shall wish to hear of *you*—and
above all to be remembered as

Yours very affectionately
A. I. B.

THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

(*Extract.*)

Knightsbridge. Saturday
[June 8th 1816].

I thank you exceedingly for communicating to me that
you *had taken* the measure proposed—You will easily
imagine my anxiety for the result—*To-day* I feel very
sanguine—because I have had a letter from *her* which
must have been written since she received yours, & in
which she does not say one word of you or your letter—
I am willing to hope & believe that this is conclusive as
to her intention of taking it as she ought—quietly at
least—& if quietly surely it must be gratefully—Her
letters of late have been dejected & melancholy to the
greatest degree, & that of to-day more so than ever—
Her letters to Ld. F. Bentinck (who is, as you probably
know, very much in her confidence & very kind to her)
are, he tells me, more melancholy than ever—but I do

not hear a word of any particular cause. Pray have the kindness to write me a line whenever you hear from her, for it is a very nervous moment—if your letter has had the desired effect, by which I mean if it makes her feel *convinced* she has been betrayed—I am persuaded that every other feeling one wishes her to have will follow of course, & you will have been the means of saving her both here & hereafter—

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

Six Mile Bottom.
June 6th 1816.

My dear Annabella

As I always mistrust the first impulses of my feelings, & did not wish to write under the influence of such as your letter could not fail to produce, I would not answer it by return of post. I cannot say that I am *wholly surprised* at its contents. Your silence towards me during so long an interval and when all *obvious* necessity for it must have ceased formed so decided a contrast to your former kindness to me—and to what *my Conscience tells me my conduct towards you deserved from you* that it could not but require some explanation. I have often thought of—though not determined—to ask it—when my health strength & spirits w[d] allow me —if my feelings have been wounded by your silence, how much more deeply they must now be so by your expressions I *need* not—*cannot* say———— To general accusations I must answer in general terms—and if I were on my death Bed I could affirm as I *now* do that I have uniformly considered you and consulted your happiness before and above any thing in this world. No sister ever could have the claims upon me that *you* had —I felt it—& acted up to the feeling to the best of my judgement. We are all perhaps too much inclined to magnify our trials, yet I think I may venture to pronounce my situation to *have been & to be still* one of extraordinary difficulty. I have been assured that the

tide of public opinion has been so turned against my Brother that the least appearance of coolness on your part towards me would injure me most seriously—& I am therefore *for the sake of my children* compelled to accept from your *compassion* the " limited intercourse " which is all you can grant to one whom you pronounce no longer worthy of your esteem or affection! But the time may come when your present convictions and opinions will change—in the interim I feel how hopeless would be every attempt to defend myself. The only person whose testimony could avail me in proving how strictly and invariably I have done my duty by you—have heard from y^r^ own lips you consider unworthy of belief. On the particular points of accusation—1st. my " not having disguised my resentment to those who befriended you——" I know of nothing but the change of manner to Miss Doyle, which was discussed between us y^e^ last time I saw you—and, 2nd. " my having countenanced the acts which were employed to injure you"——!!! really you must have been cruelly misinformed and *I* cruelly injured I ask not however by whom—for I feel I *scarcely* could forgive them. Before you judge and condemn me on the first point—you ought to consider that *I* as well as *you* may have had provocation—that it was impossible hearing and seeing all I did I should not be under the influence of *some* degree of irritation—not against those who w^d^ " be friend YOU [1] " but whom I often thought condemned OTHERS [1] *too severely*. I will not however say more at present than that you need not indeed regret having loved & trusted me so entirely—& the *sincerity of my affection for you & exclusive zeal for your welfare* ALL [2] to whom ever spoke of you—and who witnessed my conduct can fully *prove*. I would not dwell a moment on having done what was only my *duty* and *inclination* but in *self-defence*——

My " present unhappy dispositions "——! I have

[1] Underlined twice.
[2] Underlined three times.

indeed in *outward* causes sufficient to make any one *wretched* but inward peace which none can take away—It never occurred to me you could act but on the strictest sense of duty—therefore I'm convinced you do so now towards me.

God bless you—for every mark of kindness which you have bestowed on me & mine of which neither time or circumstances can efface the recollection.

Believe me gratefully & af^{ly} y^{rs}

A. L.

Will you be so good as to acknowledge the receipt of the Bulletin [1] to L^{y} Noel. I think it unnecessary to trouble her as I write to you—I am sorry to hear her acc^{t} of y^{r} health——

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

Lowestoffe—
June 15. 1816.

My dear Mrs. Villiers—

Having made a visit of two days on the road, I only arrived here yesterday, and found your letter—The material parts of the answer which I have received are that she acquiesces in the limited intercourse, and seeks no further explanation—of course she does not plead guilty, but her assertions are not exactly *to the point*, though it is evident she perfectly understands me—There is no offensive or irritating expression towards me, and notwithstanding the share which prudence may have had in preventing any such, I felt much more affected than I should have been by her indulgence of more angry feelings—In short it is perhaps the best letter she *could* have written—How bitter it is to correspond on altered terms with one whom we have not ceased to love——

Do you not consider it mutually advisable, since you have given me so much reason to consult you as *my*

[1] The bulletin as to the health of the child, Ada Byron, sent by Lady Noel to Mrs. Leigh for transmission to Lord Byron.

friend likewise, that I should write to her occasionally without adverting further to this subject ?—I do not expect that her affections will ever be *detached* from him, but I trust they will be purified by reflection and sorrow —I do not think it essential to penitence that we should hate those who have sinned with us—we may, without this equally deplore the transgression, and resolve against its renewal.

I was the object of some obtrusive curiosity on my journey, particularly at Ely and Peterborough—At Bury I was presented with the " Farewell to England " —I think it a feebler effusion of the same sentiments as in the Fare thee well—Habits of misrepresentation necessarily entail a degree of self-delusion—we say things to persuade others till we persuade ourselves—and I have always found this so true of Lord Byron, that I am inclined to think he *now* really *believes* himself the injured person. When the whole force of such an *imagination* is turned to deceive the conscience it is too easy to find " a flattering unction "—and it is perhaps one of the most melancholy & fatal misapplications of human powers.

I am writing in full view of the sea, & not many yards distant—The House adjoining mine will be inhabited by my friend the young Lady Gosford—one of those whom I value most and whose society is likely to be the more salutary to me, as she is wholly unconnected with the causes of my deeper feelings—I have not seen her for the last three years—My health will improve in this quiet life, & then I shall have more power to enjoy the blessings which remain, & of which I am most sensible—

Believe me
Yours very affectly.
A. I. B.

I find I have not time to write to Mr. Wilmot by this post—will you tell him he shall hear from me soon.

THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

Knightsbridge, June 19th [1816].

My dear Lady Byron—

Your letter has been quite a relief to my mind, tho' I in some degree anticipated its contents from the tone of all A's late letters to me—but still it is a weight off my mind that she should decidedly have taken the tone she has—at first her letters to me were all gloom & despair—speaking of her misery—of always having some fresh calamity—of her exertions to support herself on account of her baby &c.—all which *might* apply to her fresh pecuniary difficulties & I was therefore not called upon to make any comment but what related to such distresses—a total silence with respect to you and every thing concerning you *de part & d'autre* for a whole week —I then thought that absolute silence on *my* part at such a moment was almost a tacit avowal of my knowledge of what was passing, & as it was *for her sake* desirable that this should not appear I mentioned having heard that you were ill & gone to Lowestoffe & that probably this prevented your writing. Three letters arrived but no reply to this—at last came one with this sentence at the fag end—"I have written in such hurries lately I have I believe forgot to tell you that the last bulletin from Kirkby brought me also a few lines from Ly. B. I fear she is in very bad health." ! ! ! ! ! ! I expressed my surprise at her *having forgot* to tell me this & merely asked if the letter was kind—To this she has not replied tho' I have had two letters from her since, & I don't think it necessary to say any more.

I consider that what has pass'd must be conclusive with respect to your greatest object—the safety of your Child—the production of this correspondence should it ever become necessary, & her quiet acquiescence in your proposal must be sufficient for your purpose—as far therefore as this goes, & as far as being convinced she will not bring absolute & immediate ruin upon herself by an *éclat*, I feel perfectly satisfied—I agree with you as

a general principle " that it is not essential to penitence that we should hate those who have sinned with us "— but *this* I look upon as a *singular* case—& nothing but a change of feeling can in this instance prevent a recurrence of sin should the opportunity recur by *his* coming home. What has pass'd with you will effectually prevent her going to him even if he were to propose it—but that is all. Did you tell her of his having betrayed her to others or do you think it possible to do this ? Could she once be brought to *believe* this fact, I should hope much from it—She tells me she has not heard from him for a great while & I hear elsewhere that he is living at Geneva in such bad company that no English there visit him & hardly any natives—I wish from my soul he may be so occupied with fresh pursuits as to neglect her entirely—that would be her best chance—

She is ordered to come to London for the Pss. Mary's marriage which I am very sorry for—the *tourbillon* of that, & her present exertions to sell the Six mile will give her no time for reflection.

As you very kindly ask *my* opinion as to your occasionally writing to A. on indifferent subjects I must say that I think your doing so will be very kind & very useful to her—& she must acknowledge to herself that it is so—to *you* it will afford the gratification that the consciousness of performing an act of charity must give —I perfectly believe what you conjecture as to the probability of Ld. B. considering himself the aggrieved person—I have seen self delusion practised in that way to an almost incredible degree in more instances than one—

I am very sincerely anxious to hear that you derive benefit from sea air & change of scene & rejoice that you have a friend at Lowestoffe—total solitude feeds more than cures any deep affliction—

The first impression made by the " Fare thee well " is completely done away with—& I have repeatedly heard great surprise expressed lately at your extraordinary forbearance & endurance—& not a word of

your obduracy—Murray told me the Farewell to England was not Lord B.'s—& it is not published by him—Augusta has been dreadfully annoyed by the publication of the lines to her "fearing as everything was misrepresented these might be perverted too." I told her the only objectionable part was the —— instead of her name, as I saw no reason for mystery *between them*—that I thought it very unfair of Ld. B. to imply she controuled him considering what his actions were—"Still may thy spirit rest on mine," &c. but that was all.[1] . . . I sent your letter to Mr. Wilmot as his anxiety on the subject was as great as mine—but I have not seen him *alone* since to hear what he says—Adieu my dear Lady B.—I am ashamed to see the quantity I have been writing —I will not be such a bore again, but pray let me hear from you, for I can with truth say that no one *can* feel a greater interest in all that concerns you than I do & that I am in the fullest acceptation of the words

Most affectionately yrs
THERESE VILLIERS.

[The letter to which the following is an answer has not been preserved.—ED.]

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

6 Mile Bottom.
Saturday June 22 (1816).[2]

My dear Annabella—

Your letter is very acceptable—& more like comfort than *any thing* in *any shape* I have had this long time—for *one* word of kindness from *you* is I assure you of more value than many from others————I rejoice to hear so good an acc[t] of dear little A—— has she more than the 2 teeth of which I heard from Lady Noel? I wish you could tell me anything as favourable of your own health. [Here comes a long passage about her children's health and her domestic troubles.—ED.] Now my dear A— here is a sheet of paper as usual full of

[1] See Appendix D.
[2] All Mrs. Leigh's letters are endorsed with full dates by Lady Byron.

myself—Of course you received my answer to y^r^ last—since which I have written you 3 others—all *unsent*—& all my hope & wish is to see you once more—I fancied my last letter might perhaps appear written *pettishly*—& to *you* I could not bear the thought of this—so I intended to have dispatched one today if only to say that I was persuaded you thought you were acting right by me & that even *considering what you must think of me* I owe you gratitude—putting the present out of the question—y^r^ past kindness can never be forgotten—perhaps—& I earnestly hope it—that as I have often told you you once thought *too well* of me, you may some day discover you now think *too ill*—God bless you my dear A—

Ever y^r^ grateful & aff^te^

A. L.

If I am not alone don't allude to this subject as I w^d^ not add such a grievance to those which already abound.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

Endorsed: June 28. 1816.

My dear Mrs. Villiers—

I am sorry too on some accounts that A. is going to Town, but may you not do some good by seeing her, & contribute to dispel her delusions? Except at one period I have always found her much more collected & prepared to repel suspicion than he was—and I have always observed the remarkable difference, that his feelings—distinct from practice—were much more sensitive & correct on all moral questions than hers. She did not appear to think these transgressions *of consequence*. Her self-condemnation has seemed so exclusively attached to what preceded my marriage, that, in opposition to every other probability, it *has* led me to doubt a positive renewal subsequently—but it is not uncommon in such cases for a compromise to be made with conscience when *mischief* has not been intended—I had another letter

from her yesterday—and I shall give you an extract for the more you know, the better you will be enabled to judge—

[Lady Byron now gives a copy of the same extracts from Mrs. Leigh's letter of June 22, very slightly abridged, as have been printed here.]

. . . It is the idea of his occasional derangement which I suppose still continues, that prevents the estranging effect his dishonourable disclosures would otherwise have upon her—It comes in too well to indulge her blindness, and palliate his offences. I am disposed to trouble you with a copy of my reply, and request you to return it as I have no other—I shall be very glad if you think it well-calculated for the purpose I shall not give up, whilst I have any hope of being as much her friend as I wish. I feel for you when you will next meet her.

In a Postcript she desires me not to write on *the* subject except when she is *alone*, as she does not wish this to be added to other "grievances"! What is to rouse a feeling which appears completely done away, of the nature & magnitude of the offence (to which, even as an imputation, she is strangely insensible) I know not—I have endeavoured to touch her by expressing my own sentiments more fully—and was anxious to avoid every appe-[arance]? of obtruding an obligation,—when I withdrew esteem————Believe me

Yours most affectly.

A. I. B.

Lowestoffe—June 28.

Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Endorsed:[1] Copy June 30th 1816.

My dear A——

I did not mention your former letter only because any allusion to that subject must be as painful to me as to you, unless I could with sincerity express a change of opinion on the *material* point. In respect to the effects

[1] By Lady Byron.

produced by those recent parts of your conduct which were openly unfavourable to me, I am willing to believe you did not wish to injure me—and indeed I *have* made every allowance—Personal considerations have had no weight in this instance and so far I hope you are not mistaken in the charitable construction you put on my motives. I thought that expressions of kindness might be offensive with such a communication, & for that reason I forbore to say much of what was in my heart towards you—I must disclaim all acknowledgements for feelings I *cannot* resign—there is nothing to wound your pride in accepting them—and it will be some consolation to *me* if you really value them—& if they lead you to forgive the sincerity of my avowal.

Do not pain me by recurring to obligations. If I could think you owed me any, it would be only for the endurance of trials of which I endeavoured to keep you ignorant—though *you* were their cause——I was not the less anxious to spare your feelings—to hope and trust for the future even when I could not but have the strongest doubts of the past. Yet I rejected suspicion and threw myself on your generosity. You need not regret the want of *other* testimonies to the personal kindness & attention by which, notwithstanding the unhappy impression on my mind, you have alleviated my other misery—For this I am still grateful—and shall always express myself so.

You express a desire to see me——If I might think only of myself I would go to you this moment—but I may not sacrifice others—& it is due to the future welfare of my child, perhaps eventually to your own, that I should at present act on principles contrary to my inclinations. From *these* considerations our personal intercourse must be suspended—though I will never *appear* to avoid you—In time circumstances, & above all, your own conduct, may lessen or encrease the objections which now appear —and it will indeed be a moment of comfort to me, that *you* ever have real comfort in meeting me as your friend & sister.

You will remember that when I made you a promise respecting *Georgiana*,[1] I told you that no future estrangement between us would make any difference in its fulfilment—for I then instinctively felt much of what has since been brought more fully to my conviction—I will now only assure you that Georgiana could never learn from me anything but affection for her Mother, if you would still trust her with me—

A. I. B.

Lowestoffe—June 30 1816.

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

6 M. B.[2]
Wednesday Evg. July 3 (1816)

When I begin writing to you my dear Annabella one thought crowds so fast upon another that I become quite bewildered—and every attempt I make to express myself is perfectly unsatisfactory to myself—I fear must be so to *you*—I regret this the more as all I hear from you only serves to increase my sense of the obligations I owe you—I shall not however say *much* of them—in the first place because I am *dumb* always when I feel deeply—and in the next it might only add to the appearance of *duplicity* (which with y^r present opinions) you must believe me guilty of—I only wish *every past & present* thought could be open to you—you would *then* think *less* ill of me than you do now—I declare—after the strictest examination of my own heart, there is *not one act or thought towards yourself* I would not wish you acquainted with—You say my dear A—— *I have been the cause of your sufferings*—if I have it has been *innocently*—this must be my only consolation—Had I even entertained the *slightest* suspicions of any "*doubts*" of yours—I never could or would have entered your house—perhaps I did wrong as it was to do so—but I was under delusion certainly—(I don't mean *mad*). The little portion of peace now remaining is in the reflexion that

[1] Georgiana Leigh, afterwards Mrs. Trevanion.
[2] Six Mile Bottom.

I *endeavoured* to do right. I bless God daily who alone has enabled me to preserve that—& I fervently pray that *He* will also enable me to endure my present trials & all future ones it may seem fit to Him to inflict so as eventually to turn them into blessings. For your sake —and not to prolong a discussion (so) painful to you— so useless to me—I will try to be brief as possible— Dearest A—— *I have not wronged you. I have not abused your generosity*—I accept with gratitude & *shall ever* value every kind feeling of yours among my greatest blessings—I should have the same comfort I have ever felt in meeting you "*as my Friend & Sister*" since *intentionally* I have never injured you. You would pity me did you know what I must *ever* feel either in your absence or presence for having been *the cause* of one moment's unhappiness to you! but rely upon *one* thing. I will never *seek* to see you while it is *your wish* I should not—One ray of comfort & hope suggested itself in the thought that *we may meet again*—that *my future conduct* may conduce to it—Tell me—pray—of anything in that which could by possibility atone for the past—in pity— tell it me dearest A. that I may have one more chance of happiness—

(Thursday. 4th July.) In respect to the "*recent parts of my conduct openly unfavourable to you*"—will you at a convenient opportunity explain *what* they were? for I really cannot guess—& surely I had friends who w^{d} have sincerely told me of such circumstances in my conduct. Dear A. surely you have been misinformed—supposing me actuated by no better motive —regard for *myself* should have deterred me from such acts. I certainly have never *wished* to injure you—nor do I think I *could* had I desired it—I have another thing to say on the subject of *my* transmitting accounts of little A. A. It was imposed upon me without consulting me—though I heard the intention mentioned in a vague manner like others—My head was not then equal to judge whether it w^{d} be right or wrong—& indeed I never considered it a certainty, till *too late* to decline it.

Ever since the receipt of your *first* letter—I have *wished* to do so—& have only been deterred by the fear of exciting suspicions which I would not do for the world. As long as I thought myself secure of your approbation, affection and esteem I really *would* never, *have never*, even to spare myself, declined any thing for the comfort or good of either party—but—NOW [1] I do owe it to myself & others to avoid every possibility however remote of incurring censure—I wish I knew *how* to manage this! I have hitherto made it a rule to avoid every subject which might create or renew irritation——

Your kind offer about Georgiana—There is no human Being to whom I would so soon entrust her as *you*—I cannot say *more* except that ALL [1] *your kindness* will ever be gratefully felt & remembered—*every* act, & I am fully aware how more & more I owe you gratitude—God bless you, my dearest A——

All this is quite unsatisfactory to me—as perfectly inadequate to express my feelings to you—I am so sorry you are not better—it is a comfort that L^y^ Gosford is with you & that you have no uneasiness about little A. A.—How is your Mother? I conclude not at Lowestoffe—you talked of Tunbridge for her & I hope she has tried it—I expect George [2] on Sunday—& as our letters are 2 days on the road I fear I can't hear from you by that day—I believe I shall be obliged to go to Town—perhaps *next* week—I will let you know if I do—

I am interrupted & obliged to conclude in haste—

Ever y^r^ most grateful & aff^e^

A. L.

[1] Underlined twice.
[2] Colonel Leigh.

CHAPTER X

ADDITIONAL LETTERS: FROM ANNE ISABELLA BYRON, AUGUSTA LEIGH AND THERESE VILLIERS (*continued*)

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

L. July 8. 1816.

My dear Mrs. Villiers—I cannot delay communicating to you, though I can do so but imperfectly for want of leisure, the very great comfort & strong hopes I have derived from the answer to my last letter of which I sent you a copy.—Her eyes seem to be opened, and her feelings awakened in a manner that convinces me she was wholly ignorant of her having been the cause of so much suffering to me—She speaks from her heart I am sure—admits respecting what preceded my marriage as much as she could do on paper—maintains her *innocence* since, but seems to be suddenly made sensible of her extreme *self-delusion*—confesses she might be wrong in *ever entering my house*, that she would not had she known my doubts—finally she entreats me in the most humble & affecting manner to point out in pity to her anything by which she may "atone for the past"—She appears to have been overcome by a sense of what she considers generous & kind on my part, & the great thing now is not to interrupt this strain of returning feeling—and of gratitude—for I have always thought that motive very powerful with her—

I cannot write to her again at present on account of *his*[1] return—but I will whenever I can, and have a confident hope of restoring the better part of her mind —though I have found a persevering affection fruitless in one instance—*here* there is much more to assist me—

I am now convinced it has been more of self-delusion than duplicity.—At one time as you know, appearances

[1] Colonel Leigh.

were so strong as to shake this opinion—but I return to it with a feeling of real consolation—In your sanction I have a valuable support, but were I to stand alone, *I never would forsake her*—Those who judge by cold & general rules might condemn me—but I am justified by my motives, and trust I shall be so by the result likewise—Your feelings are most friendly towards her, but should her pride or self-delusion at any future moment excite your displeasure, I now ask you to forgive her *for my sake*—

It is to you I am indebted for the particular suggestion, by following which an effect so gratifying to me has been produced—She very properly expresses a wish to decline *transmitting* the accounts of my child—& I understand from what she says that she will decline *all* correspondence with him—

Mr. W[ilmot] expressed some thoughts of rebuking her for the unfavourable impressions she might have given or encouraged respecting me—but unless such errors were renewed (which I now think quite impossible) it is certainly desirable not to create irritation by making *me* in any way an occasion of *reproach*—it would interfere with my present views—and how much better to influence by gratitude than by fear—My heart is full and I hope you will read it better than I can write it—believe me

My dear Mrs. V——
Yours most affectly.
A. I. B.

THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

[*Extract.*]

Knightsbridge.
Tuesday July 9th [1816].

No words can tell you my dear Lady Byron the comfort & relief which your last letter just arrived has afforded me—The extract which you sent me in your former one was, to my mind, anything but satisfactory—it was confession without penitence—& I thought I saw a fancied security of ignorance in all the world *but you* (of

whose generous discretion she had no fear,) that would prevent any change of feeling or conduct, except towards *you* individually—& I will own to you that I found my feelings more changed towards her than I ever meant they should be—I felt that I could not answer for my forbearance if she should in conversation to me either express herself too warmly towards *him*, or too coldly towards *you*—& I was growing quite nervous at the thoughts of her return to Town—All this is done away *completely* by the perusal of your last letter—I think I am justified in saying *very* confidently that her mind *was* purity & innocence itself, & now her eyes are really opened as to the enormity she has been led into, her former feelings & principles will I really hope & believe return with double force—provided always—that *he* does not return—& *that* I trust is a very improbable event—Her having a just sense of gratitude to you is a great point in her favour—& the more she reflects on your unparalleled kindness to her the more it *must* increase daily. There is an expression in her last letter to me which struck me at the moment I read it but does so much more forcibly now—Speaking of her own grievances, & some that had lately occurred to us, she says " What a world this is ! & yet I am quite unfit for the next "—it shows how much the horror of her past conduct is uppermost in her mind—& if it does but continue so, the next step *must* be to try with your kind assistance, to make herself more fit for the next—it is now in a good train & every letter of yours will do more and more good—I fancy she will be in town (at the Apartments in St. James's) about next Saturday. I see her great anxiety is to come before Hobhouse goes.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.
[*Extract.*]

Lowestoffe,
July 11th 1816.

Your letter has done me so much good that I have nearly forgotten all the evils of physique & morale.

Your views and mine entirely coincide—I shall enclose, probably to-morrow, a letter to Augusta to your care (with a note you can show her), as I am very anxious she should have it before the conference with Hobhouse—I must regret that she means to have one—I know not whether his be the perversion of wilfulness or weakness, but he has a morbid delight in the worst parts of human nature, and a bitter spirit of infidelity which even supposing him honest, (and I have doubts) render him likely to do more harm than good—She disliked & mistrusted him, and suddenly, after I left Lord B—changed—I have never understood why—

The principal points of my letter to her will be—To press still more on her *delusion*—for else her eyes may close again, and I feel it would be a false delicacy that might lead me to abstain from probing the wound—My tenderness will however naturally increase with the pain I give, and will in her present temper, obtain forgiveness for my motives—I shall concede as much as possible for her good intentions towards me—She says—"I have *not* wronged you—I have not abused your generosity"—When Delusion has once been carried so far, it is difficult to say to what it may not extend—but surely by these assertions she must mean that she has been *innocent* since my marriage—I have a little difficulty in accounting for some things on this supposition, but they *certainly* are not strong enough to justify a contrary opinion. . . .

Lady Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Endorsed Copy. July 11th, 1816. Third letter.

Lowestoffe. July 11 1816.

My dear A——

I must make my opinion fully understood, for you think it unjust to you, and you would not, if you knew it better. *That we may never mistrust each other again*, it is necessary that we should now be perfectly confidential—

I have always felt that " Duplicity " was foreign to your character, and if I said I could not believe your professions (when so much conspired to render them doubtful) I rather meant I could not *depend on them*— for knowing how far your " delusion " had been carried, and not knowing you were so sensible of it as you now express yourself, to what might I not reasonably apprehend it did, or would extend? I felt it on every account incumbent on me to awaken you to it, if I could—no longer to spare your feelings or my own by concealing the real nature of circumstances—Thus what has appeared to you most cruel was meant most kind, and it is my comfort to remember that at the many times *from the first week of my marriage*, when *that* thought has nearly driven me to madness one unkind or inconsiderate feeling towards you has never actuated me— wherever my judgment has erred forgive its weakness— I am most anxious not to perceive the delusions of others more clearly than my own.

In the last part of the time we were under the same roof, you will now remember some things by which I intimated that I knew more than you thought, and almost offered myself to your confidence—not to betray it, *as it has been betrayed*—but that I might have more power to befriend you, if you were sincerely desirous to " atone for the past "—for I knew more of your dangers than you did and acted as if you had trusted me in counteracting them to the best of my power—Of this I could give *proofs*—I appeal to the past, not to oppress you with a sense of obligations which your intentions towards me have amply repaid, but in hopes that you will find consolation in trusting one whose friendship has been thus tried & will not fail—It is equally in your power to secure my entire confidence & esteem by persevering in those principles of strict self-examination & duty which you speak of as governing you at present— As you do not, and never have attempted to deceive me respecting previous facts, of which my conviction is unalterable, I rely the more on your simple assertion of

having "never wronged me" intentionally—*I believe it implicitly*—and I lament that you *misjudgingly* pursued a line of conduct so difficult for yourself—so dangerous & I believe so prejudicial to the ungoverned feelings of another—and inevitably tending to continue or renew *his* criminal recollections. Pardon a word I will never repeat—Dearest Augusta—You will think, perhaps justly, that I erred in encouraging you myself—but my situation was most extraordinary—I could not, till a late period, *bear to admit things to myself* sufficiently to act upon them—and resisted what would have brought absolute conviction to any other person—and you were to me the kindest friend & comforter—I could tell you much of the struggles in my mind, but since it makes you unhappy to think you were the occasion of them, I will entreat you only to think of the consolation you can afford me—better perhaps than anyone—

When I speak of the necessity of confidence, do not suppose I wish to exact any confession—Let the past be *understood* now, to be buried in future—and whenever we do meet, I hope you will not imagine I am under the influence of any feeling that could distress you,—for I have often felt in your presence, under much more painful circumstances, all that I *could* now feel—& it has had no effect on me but that of rendering me more tenderly fearful of adding to the pain & oppression I believed you already felt—From this motive I have appeared unconscious of a thousand allusions, as intelligible to me as to you—To my husband I had another motive for assuming ignorance, having *had reason* to think that my life & every hope might depend upon it—You will feel that it was impossible to go on thus—and it would alone have formed a sufficient ground for the step I took—When I tell you *that* step has been conducive to my peace of mind—something may be added to your own—God grant that we *all* who have been partakers of misery may be partakers of eternal peace, and may I be judged hereafter by the truth of all I now reveal!

Your own friends have acknowledged that "the language you held" after my separation was "certainly injurious to me,"—I quote the words of one—I have heard from many others of the disadvantageous impressions of my *feelings* which had been received from your conversation, not that you were said to blame me directly, but your representations of circumstances made my conduct appear cold & cruel—Of course my parents have been more hurt at this than I was.

After what I have expressed of my own conviction it is necessary I should solemnly declare that it is *impossible* the report should have arisen in any way from me or my connections—To *them* it occasioned *entire surprise*—I was only too well prepared for it.

I confide in you to consult *my* welfare as much as your own with regard to the suppression or communication of what has passed between us to the person whom it next concerns.—I have totally resigned the idea of receiving justice from him—and fear he will see *every thing* in a *perverted* light—I think it desirable he should have no ground to *imagine* me *unkind* towards you—

Write to me & tell me if you can that I am still as dear to you as I shall ever wish to be—and trust me as being most truly

Your affec[e]
A. I. B.

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

S[t] J. P.(1)
Monday. (15 July 1816)

I am particularly anxious to write to you my dearest A—— yet uncertain whether I shall be able to do so fully—as I am every moment interrupted—& expecting somebody on business—I received yr letter from Mrs. V. *late* on Saturday—it is quite impossible for me to say what I feel towards you for all the kindness *past present*

[1] St. James's Palace.

contained in it—but I think you understand that sort of difficulty on my part—& if not I too well know how you can make allowances.

The *delusion* to which I alluded—was an *entire unsuspicion*—that *you even suspected*—that I caused or added to your misery—which *every* thing on *your* part & many on that of *another* tended to confirm—as I now remember "some things" to which you allude—you may also some which could not but deceive me—it is still like a *horrid dream* to me my dearest A—— that *I* caused yr sufferings whose whole anxiety was at least to mitigate them—I felt it as my only consolation to do *all* I could, & indeed to the best of my judgment I *did* it. Many a time I should have felt it one to have confided unreservedly in you—but concealment appeared a duty under such circumstances—& you know I am of a sanguine disposition & to the very last had hopes of better for you—& for him. I lament from my heart—all the *un*intentional errors to which you allude. I can never accuse you of *injustice*—but I am not sure even now if on *one* point you are not mistaken—& I don't know how to explain myself—What *can* I say to you of my present & past feelings—except that I wish my heart were open to you—that you might judge of its weaknesses & point out the remedy—I hope it is not presumption in me to say that *some* of its feelings w^{d} be such as to give you consolation—My dear A—— I am perfectly unable to decide *how* to act for the best respecting *him* & his knowledge of what has passed between us—if only *I* was concerned in y^{e} consequences I should care less—*Certainly* it is desirable he should have no ground to imagine you unkind towards me—but as yet—I have had positive injunctions never to mention anybody or anything except the little girl—of whom I've transmitted the bulletins. I have now a safer opportunity than y^{e} post of sending any particular communication as his friend H. is to set out to join him next Sunday—I wish you to reflect on what I had better do—I really *must now* entirely mistrust my own judgment—there are

dangers to be apprehended *both* ways—at least I see many from his ignorance.

I must not forget—& I write so uncomfortably I fear I shall half I w^d & *could* say—that I am equally surprised & hurt at what you quote as the language of any friend of mine—I must say that I could no longer consider any one in that light who could say such a thing *of* not *to* me—& I declare to you no one ever even hinted it—on the contrary—the few to whom I could not help speaking always manifested surprise at the part I took—not knowing circumstances—when I had told as much of *them* as I *could*, I always replied to arguments " *if you knew all you would think differently* "—but my situation was so difficult I *ought* not to be surprised at having incurred censure—& *only* feel it because I never met with it *openly*. If you mean by my representation of circumstances that I have mentioned the idea of *insanity* —I certainly did dear A—— but *always* at the same time that you were the particular object of *irritation* & *aversion* & the consequences of that quite insupportable —in short I cannot reproach myself with even a *thought* prejudicial to you—& I am deeply hurt at what you tell me—I never thought the report came from you or yours —I know too well how to account for it. When I talk of difficulties I've had to encounter don't think I mean to *complain* of them—I'm sensible of their original cause —& am & have been most anxious to atone for *that*. Your friendship & kindness is the greatest comfort I have —my dear A——Heaven will reward for all—I never can express myself as I wish towards you—Tell me of any thing I can do—or any wrong feeling you may discern— This letter is all confusion owing to many perplexing circumstances which prevent me from writing calmly— interruptions & the fear of them——

Tuesday. (16th July, 1816).

I could not get a frank for this yesterday—which worried me as I wished to have despatched this letter all imperfect as it is—but I really *cannot* express myself as

AUGUSTA LEIGH

From a Miniature by J. Holmes

I wish to you & therefore must trust to you to understand me—& make allowances for what is deficient—there are more things I would write to you—Would to God that our hearts had been open to each other from the first—it might have saved me *unintentional* errors—I hope my dear A you won't think it wrong in me to desire this—you are the only being on this earth whom I could have wish'd to confide in.

I've been interrupted & can only now say my dear A—
y^r most affec^e & grateful
[a dash for signature.]

I shall remain here all this week—& until after the R . . . l Marriage.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Endorsed copy. Fourth letter.

Lowestoft.
July 17. 1816.

My dearest A——

Indeed, indeed I cannot say all the comfort your letter has given me. I do most heartily wish with you that we had trusted each other more fully—and acknowledge that my own uncertainty of conduct might deceive you, & embarrass yours—I knew not what was best—my indecision might be weakness—and if it has injured you, I deeply regret it—but I did not see things as clearly whilst they were passing, as I do in reviewing them—and the excuse I make for myself I of course extend to you. You are very kind in understanding me as you do, for I am well aware that the very fear of giving pain sometimes makes me appear unfeeling. I hope I understand you as well as any human being can another—will you still think me mistaken " on one point " when I say I am now thoroughly convinced that if from the hour we first met *all* your conduct had been open to me *I* could not have found in it any thing to reproach you with—for that your errors of judgment, however to be regretted, were *perfectly innocent*—God knows what

satisfaction I have in making this acknowledgement —& in resigning doubts as to *those* parts of your conduct which have but transiently existed & will never return to wrong you. Tell me if this is satisfactory ?

It was not of my sufferings in general—but of particular ones that I spoke of you as the cause, &, as I *never* expressed any feeling towards you which was not *sincere*, you must not imagine I had less comfort in you than I had—I only did not tell you how that comfort was at times embittered.

You ask me to tell you any thing in which I may imagine you err—The only return I can make is to open my thoughts—& you must judge if they are right or wrong—It seems to me that you dwell too much on the pain you involuntarily occasioned me, and not enough on the irreparable injury you did *him* by the voluntary sacrifices (for to principles & feelings like yours they must have been *entirely* sacrifices) which you once made to his immediate indulgences. Perhaps with you he has not given way to the frantic agonies of Remorse—alas ! far from repentance, which I have seen awakened by any thing in connection with that fatal remembrance. I know there were other causes for his Despair, but I believe this to have been as baneful as any—and it made *all succeeding* intimacy unavoidably injurious. As far as any human being is concerned, it is towards *him* not me, that expiation is due—I have often regretted that the last time we met some bitter feelings (not towards you) which were only the momentary consequences of my situation at the time, influenced me, and may lead you to suppose that I have relinquished a fruitless anxiety for his ultimate good—But I believe Heaven is always open & *this* hope for him is still dear to me, as the only one that can remain of those that once more nearly concerned me. I have a difficulty in advising as to the communication, from being so ignorant of his present dispositions—I conceive that his *fear* of my penetration would as in other cases, create *hatred*—& I

do not see the evils of *postponing* the disclosure—but if the evils are to *you*, act so as to avoid them, & you will fulfil my wishes—I will reflect further on this point.

Do not feel any more concern that your expressed sentiments were misunderstood. From what you tell me it could not be your fault & I must say that there was no unfriendly intention towards you in the admission by others of what *they* saw differently—I hope you will not be under the painful necessity of renewing that topic with any who do not enter into your feelings as I should.

I have good accounts from Kirkby. Little A—— continues quite well—and I am better—The renewal of our confidence in each other has done me good—it is a comfort to say as well as to feel that I am

Yours most affec[ly]

A. I. B.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

L. Wednesday.
(July 17th 1816).

My dear Mrs. V——

I have an answer—*all* that it ought to be or that I could desire—It thoroughly convinces me of her innocence in regard to all the period with which I was concerned—and that every error towards me has not been of the *heart* but *the judgment*—I feel most thankful for this conviction & these feelings—

I hope Mr. W——[1] is sensible of the propriety, indeed necessity of an indulgent conduct under these circumstances—I have no time—but you will be too happy to know thus much for me to need any excuse.

Yours most affectly.

A. I. B.

[1] R. Wilmot Horton.

[Part of the following letter is quoted in Chap. III., p. 61].

THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

Knightsbridge.
July 18th 1816.

My dear Lady Byron

I almost fear you must have thought me ungrateful for all the kindness of all your letters by having been silent so long—but in truth my silence has proceeded from a wish to have it in my power to communicate anything to you respecting poor A.—which should be at all satisfactory. I cannot tell you *much* now—but your letter of yesterday just arrived determines me to write—She came sooner than she expected being ordered to come up for the Regent's fete—She wrote to me the preceding day to prepare her dress for her, & therefore when we first met (an interview wh. I own *I* dreaded beyond measure) our whole conversation turned on *Gauzes & Sattins*—but I was foolishly dissatisfied—I thought her looking quite stout & well (wh. bye the bye she still does) & perfectly cool & easy, having apparently nothing on her mind but what there was abundance of ostensible cause for—this rather provoked me—the next day I had your letter to give her & I will own to you it made me so nervous I could not do it—indeed considering all that had passed on your subject before she left London it would have been quite unnatural for me to have given it without asking to see it, or questioning her as to its contents—I therefore left it in the Carriage, & at the end of my visit I told her I had it there & would send it in by the servant. She looked rather surprised but not alarmed—I sent it with its envelope to me—the next day I went there—but determined to ask no questions—at last—when the Child & maid were in the room she asked me if she shd. return me your note—I said "oh yes," & then asked if yours to her was kind. She said "very much so"—"particularly so"—I

merely replied "I was sure it would be—remember I always told you how kind she was about you"—to this no reply—I ask'd about your health she said it was but indifferent—& then the subject dropped—& has never been renewed—Yesterday, for the first time, she dined here, & was here between 4 and 5 hours, & I must say that in my life I never saw any thing equal to her dejection—her absence—her whole mind evidently preoccupied & engrossed—& apparently insensible of being in society—Mr. V., who really exerted himself & commanded himself much better than I expected to shew her as much kindness as before, tells me that while I was called out of the room to speak to a person, he could not extract an answer—even a monosyllable from her—except when he joked about the predicted destruction of the world to-day—& said (a propos to some arrangements which the boys wanted to make) "We need not give ourselves any trouble about it for the world will be at an end to-morrow & that will put an end to all our cares"—she quite exclaimed before the boys, the servants, &c., "I don't know what *you* may all be but I'm sure *I'm* not prepared for the next world, so I hope this will last"—this seemed the only topic that roused her—This looks well for her mind—if this feeling is well kept up I hope every thing from it *with time*—but do not think me brutal or even unkind if I tell you the work is not done yet—I accidentally found yesterday by her question about foreign postage of letters that she was going to write to Ld. B. to-day—it is perhaps natural even necessary that she should write for the purpose of breaking off that correspondence—but till THAT[1] is fairly & completely broken through—there will be but little good done depend upon it—& as nobody *can* do anything but you I mention this that you may enforce its necessity in any manner you think best—From my manner to her individually I am positive she cannot guess that I am better informed than when we last met—but what she may infer from my total silence on *his* subject I know

[1] Underlined twice.

not—but I am sure she thinks *I have* a motive for she scarcely ever mentions him herself, & if she does, it is in a sort of way as if she was shy of his name which never was the case before—She told me she was sure my parcel had gone safe (a parcel I had entrusted to Mr. Fletcher for a person at Lausanne) *as they had* passed a day at Lausanne—Another day she told me she had seen Messrs Hobhouse & Davies together & that they were going to Geneva directly—upon which I merely said " is Lord B. still there "—She said " yes—or near there " & then told me something of a boat in which he was going round the Lake & that Hobhouse said his crew would be drowned by his management, but that *he* wd. be safe by swimming. Then after the fête she told me Miss Mercer had come up & spoken to her there, had been very gracious & enquired *very much about Geneva*, & this I think in the whole week she has been in town are the only instances of her mentioning or rather alluding to him.

She has ceased to speak of Mr. Wilmot with any harshness, & in short I hope there is a very great amendment—but if the evil is not well eradicated, I feel convinced that he [Byron] will regain at pleasure his ascendancy over her mind—Mr. W. has as yet had no private conversation with her but he told me last night he meant to have some & to talk of you—your merits &c.—& to say that he knew there were people who considered you as cold hearted, unforgiving, &c & that he advised her (A) to put a stop to that sort of language whenever she heard it in any friends of hers, or it would be the worse for her—I see no objection to this—but he promises me to do it in a kind way. He tells me he is going abroad with Mr. Ward [Lord Dallas] for six weeks—A. will I believe stay till after the 12th August. Nothing can be worse than their affairs, pecuniarily—nothing can be more tiresome & impracticable than Colonel L. of which alas ! she seems more than ever aware—What they are to do I cannot guess. The Duke of Leeds is to petition Lord Liverpool, but in these days of reduction he can

have no chance unless by an arrangement such as was proposed last year with Warwick Lake—A's child is a fine one & she goes on nursing successfully ! !

Now I think I have told you all I know about her & tho' it is *dully* & *prosily* told I know the subject will interest you—Depend upon it she will never open her heart to *me*—or indeed to anyone—but to *me* she could not—considering the part she has frequently made me take in her concerns upon a perfect persuasion of her innocence for the last three years. I daresay you are quite right in believing that she never transgressed during your residence in Piccadilly—I can perfectly imagine her having quieted her conscience by that salve—& it accounts (satisfactorily) for much of her conduct.

[I omit a passage dealing with the health of Lady Byron & Mr. Villiers, which follows here.—ED.]

God bless you my dear Lady Byron—Do not hate me for this voluminous production—the next shall be more laconic—but in all ways & at all times you will find me most truly and

Affectionately yours,
T. V.

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

[*Extract.*]

St. J.s P.
Saturday (20th July 1816.)

It is comfort to me to think my letter gave you any or that I can have been y^e^ means of contributing to restore peace in the slightest degree—I know I never *can* feel sufficiently grateful for the blessing you are to me my dearest A—— Don't I pray reproach yourself —any indecision in *your* conduct was caused I am convinced by kindness & consideration which no other human being would have shown in similar circumstances —What you say my dear A on the "one point" is indeed "satisfactory"—in y^e^ GREATEST[1] degree to me—I

[1] Underlined twice.

have not time now to say how much so—or half I wish—but I don't like to lose this frank or let pass this post without thanking you & acknowledging the receipt of your letter.

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

(London.)
Tuesday Night (July 23rd 1816).

My dearest A—Do not imagine that either silence or an uncomfortable letter are proofs of forgetfulness on my part. Without doing much, I have scarcely a moment of peace & quiet here—constant interruptions of one sort or other—& from a remains of nervous weakness I believe—my head becomes so confused that I cannot collect my thoughts so as to express one-half of them to you. I have felt quite vexed at the recollection of the hurry I wrote to you in—yet I could not help it. You are so kind & good to me I would not have you think that I feel it one bit less than I really do—& it is impossible you *can* know *how* much that is—but *I know* you will make allowances. You(r) last letter my dearest A was such a comfort to me—y^e^ greatest I can at present receive—since I think from it you *do* "understand me as well as any human being can another," & I have suffered a great deal from the idea that you might & did mistake *on one point.* Don't reproach yourself—or imagine I could ever reproach you for past *doubts*—it was but too natural you should have had them & none but you would so kindly have dismissed them. Thank you my dear A—— for complying with my request—& offering your thoughts—I am certain they are right & I assure you I always mistrust *my own* & endeavour to examine into every motive. Tell me always when you see anything wrong & believe me that greatest act of friendship will be most gratefully felt and acknowledged. I never witnessed any thing like what you have alas! & describe to have been *his* Agonies—& whatever I have suffered I have always carefully concealed from him,

altho' could I have hoped for any good effect it might have been greater kindness not to have done so I have said but little of *him* my dearest A—— fearing you might mistake y^e^ *nature* of my feelings—I am certain they are & ever have been such as you could not disapprove—If I did but know how to contribute to his ULTIMATE [1] good! but Alas! I do not—tho' like you *that* hope is cherished as the dearest of all—I rely upon your offering me your thoughts upon this & every point my dearest A—that is to say if you see no objection to *yourself* in so doing—I am perhaps raising up melancholy recollections & doing you harm—then tell me so sincerely & every thing else you would wish to say to me—& how I can by any means contribute to your comfort—I have thought much about the communication you allude to in yr last letter—& think certainly that it would be better at least postponed—I have been forbid to mention *any & every* thing but his child—& it was a relief to me —for without I could do any good I would much rather be silent—I have written by his two friends—whose departure however will not I believe take place before Saturday or Sunday—& only swerved from the rule indicated to me so far as to say I had met with y^e^ greatest kindness from you. Dearest A—— it *must ever* give me great concern to think that anything I could have said wore the appearance even of unkindness towards you— I have very long avoided " that topic," except when I thought I could change opinions injurious to *you*—& I have even experienced that my very *silence* has been turned against me! so it is difficult to know what to do —yet I believe that is the safest line——

this letter has as usual met with 10,000 interruptions but it must go " with all its imperfections on its head "

I hope your health continues to improve & y^t^ of little Ada to be perfect—I fear I must remain here till after y^e^ 12th when My Mistress gives a great affair to which I shall be summoned—nothing *good* at home, except that my darlings are well——

[1] Underlined twice.

Georgey's love *and she is going to write* to you immediately

Ever my dearest A——
Most affec[ly] & gratefully y[rs]

finished Wed[y].

THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.
[*Extract.*]

Knightsbridge.
Saturday July 27th [1816].

I so much wish to believe that A—— is in a good way that I try to think her letters to you sincere, tho' there are some things I cannot quite reconcile to my mind—if I understand you right you have *implied* to her that the continuation of *your* friendly intercourse with her depends upon the cessation of hers with *him* & I think I also understand that when she declined being the transmitter of the bulletins of the Child she *implied* to you that she should relinquish the correspondence altogether. Now this I know she has not done—for since my last letter to you I have seen upon her table a thick unsealed letter addressed by her to him—How far it would be expedient or prudent (for the reasons you very justly alledge) for her to break off this intercourse abruptly is another question—& one on which she ought to consult you, & on which your judgment & opinion should be her guide, but considering all that has passed she must not *say* one thing to you, & *do* another—*You* are, I grant, the only human being in whom she can confide, in whom it is fair & reasonable to expect her to confide, be her penitence what it may—but in *you* she is *now* bound to confide implicitly—& *to* you she is bound to obey implicitly.

God bless you dear Lady B—
Always most truly & affectionately yrs.
THERESE VILLIERS.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

Lowestoft. July 28
(1816)

I am happy to say, my dear Mrs. Villiers, that I have no reason to suspect A—— of acting a double part about the correspondence—She submitted it to my opinion whether she should immediately make the communication to him which must be preparatory to any change, and I advised that it should be *postponed*, as I thought it required mature consideration—She was therefore at present to send the same *formal* accounts as before, for she told me he had forbidden her to write about anything but the child—She says that in her last letter she has only mentioned respecting me that I had shown her " the greatest kindness "—This is all well and I am now leading her on to promise that she will never renew a confidential intercourse by letter—or any personal intercourse—I find it necessary to gain step by step, and to disclose my views less abruptly than with some. She is perpetually relapsing into compromises with her conscience, and is at present under one of these delusions, which I cannot show you better than in the words of her letter, on which I shall animadvert very severely, as there is no fallacy more dangerous than that which makes a merit of *feelings* when the *conduct* is culpable—

" I have said little of him, my dearest A—— fearing you might mistake the *nature* of my feelings—I am *certain* they are & ever have been such as you could not disapprove " !

In another melancholy instance of crime, I have very lately heard the excuse, that there was " no error *in the heart* "—Upon such principles what may not be justified ? It is sad to think of a mother impressing lessons of this nature on the minds of her children—and of Georgy particularly, who requires the best instruction—I *wish* very much to see A—— and it has only been from consideration for her good, which may be best promoted by

withholding *something*, that I have not yet promised to see her—

Lady Granville having received a strong impression against A—— which, when she visited me, I could not counteract any further than by expressing my own kind feelings, I thought it right in the present state of things between A & me, to write to Lady G. requesting as a favour to myself, that she would show the same kindness to A—— as formerly. Lady G. has written to me saying that in consequence she called upon her. Having taken all the care I could of her character *in the world*, I have now only to attend to her character in more material respects—& for this task I have at least *patience* enough—

I feel so much as if you were an *old* friend that I cannot afford you a *new* pen, but hope you will be able to make out what is scrawled with this—I did not wish to leave the impression of any *duplicity* on your mind for another hour—

Ever yours most affectly.
A. I. B.

Lady Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Lowestoffe July 30
1816.

. . . It is in hearts like yours & mine, dearest A——, where kind feelings have so much power, that their excess even in the shape of *sacrifice*, is to be guarded against—and those particular ones to which we *have* yielded too much ought to be those from which we should afterwards withdraw as much as possible—*Certainly* when regard for the welfare of others also enjoins us to withdraw—

Consider all the reasons against any future personal intercourse between you & him by an earlier regard to which evils might have been prevented—First—his inclinations to misuse it—against a return of which you can never feel *secure* in a character so unstable—& you

would thus expose *him* to temptation—If *you* have been sanguine in the disinterested hope of contributing actively to his good, *I* have indulged it for you beyond the bounds of reason, & have always most earnestly desired that you should have the comfort of being instrumental to that end—but your chance of being so, at least by any personal endeavours, has I fear been sacrificed—Associations most prejudicial to a good influence from you, have subsisted too deeply & too habitually in *his* mind—What has passed *on his part* since my marriage, in my presence, as well as in my absence, must on reconsideration, convince you they were in no degree done away—*Our* visit to SMB[1]—even the first night of it will make you sensible of this—He then made me most cruelly sensible of what engrossed his thoughts & actuated his conduct—*His* visit to you afterwards, when his resentment was excited by the blameless principle of your opposition, in short, many more facts I shall not recall, lead to the same conclusion —His feelings towards you have varied—& they were seldom suppressed with me—Sometimes he has spoken of you with compassion—sometimes with bitter scorn— & sometimes with dispositions still more reprehensible —The only time when I believe he was really on the very brink of Suicide, was on an occasion relating to his remorse about you—If I think you have something to atone for to him, much more do I think he owes *you* atonement. Till you feel that he has in reality been your worst friend—indeed, *not* your friend—you cannot altogether think rightly—yet I am far from thinking any uncharitable feelings are to follow—forgive him— desire his welfare—but resign the pernicious view of being his friend more nearly—do not think me cruel— you would not if you knew how happy it would make me that wishes which I do not misunderstand, & even feel for you, could accord with any reasonable or religious consideration of the relative circumstances.

There is another reason too of the greatest weight—

[1] Six Mile Bottom.

For the sake of your children—both as respects the world's opinion of yourself and still more from the injury young minds must receive in the society of one so unprincipled—I feel most anxious for your children in this respect, & for dear Georgiana particularly, whom, as you must remember he had every disposition to injure—& you will not be offended when I say also that I think his mind too *powerful* for you—I could not feel secure that he would not bewilder you on any subject—The nature of his character (which I *could* make clearer to you than it is) gives him great advantage over *any one* in this respect.

You seem to have understood from the anxiety I retain that he should become more fit for another world, that I have yet some idea of assisting that end personally No—Such hope is as far from me as from you —& it would only be in one circumstance that I would ever consent to see him again—Alas—my dear A—you do not, I believe, know him—The Selfishness of *strong passions*, & when *Romance* is made the colouring & the mask of Vice, is not so easily perceived, as the selfishness of a calmer temper & less fascinating imagination—and the *arts* of a character naturally open and ingenuous, till it was changed & taught to deceive at an early age by the dreadful necessity of concealment—is not as *obvious* as the duplicity of one whose heart was less formed for confidence—Such, as I once told you are the fatal effects of a Solitary Secret—it Chills & hardens & absorbs—& the heart which it does not break must become depraved —if Religious feelings do not save it—

I should not advise you for his sake to restrict your correspondence further than by keeping always in view to *rectify* instead of *soothing* or *indulging* his feelings—by avoiding therefore all phrases or *marks*, which may recall wrong ideas to his mind—& even should this excite his irritation, it will do him less injury than compliance—and let me also warn you against the levity & nonsense which he likes for the worst reason, because it prevents him from reflecting seriously—at a distance you

may perhaps be better able to say things occasionally which will make an impression—the more so, as *you* are not suspected of *preaching*—or of knowing what, when we meet, I may perhaps impart.

I will stop—perhaps already I have gone too far in using the privilege you allow me—But I will hope not to be quite useless to one I love so well—Let me know what opinions you may form on the subjects of my letter & believe me always—

Your most affec^te^
A. I. B

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

Monday night (August 5 1816).

I have considered my dearest A all the reasons you *have* kindly represented against future personal intercourse & others which you have *not* & I perfectly agree with you it is most desirable to avoid it—at the same time I think it w^d^ be very difficult for me & might lead to consequences very injurious to more than me to make any open *declarations* about it. Consider the appearance to the World & to *some* in particular to whom I can't state *all* my reasons—& the effects on *him*—at the same time I would as ENTIRELY [1] *as possible* avoid it—but do reflect on *many* reasons for doing it prudently—At present there seems little prospect of my being exposed to *this* difficulty. I have no idea of his returning & if I gave way to my own forebodings, they w^d^ incline me to think we should never meet again—but to dwell on such is useless———I assure you most solemnly—most truly—I have *long* felt that he has *not* been my friend—but from my heart I forgive him—& pray to God to forgive him & change his heart—to restore him to peace—& there is nothing I would not do which could be done consistently with my duty to God & to others to contribute to his good—how far & whether I may ever be able to do so it is I think impossible to foresee—since *futurity* is veiled

[1] "Entirely" underlined twice.

from us—I perfectly agree with you my dearest A that the *present* presents no hope of the sort—pray do not misunderstand me—supposing he returns, nothing could induce me

Wed^{y}. I left off there dearest A. & have not been able to resume—I was going to say that nothing should induce me to see him again so frequently or in the way I have done—but that merely I see difficulties in saying *I will never see you again*—which I think you w^{d} understand or if I could see you I could explain—I only hope it won't appear to you that I am thinking of my own gratifications—

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

Friday (August 9 1816).

Dearest A/

I've been thinking with dismay of the letter full of blots & scratches & imperfections of every description which I sent you the other day—how it *was*—or how it *is* I scarcely know—but I am in one constant hurry & worry—I lay (*sic*) in my Bed thinking all I would say to you & when I get up my thoughts are all put to flight by 10000 worries of the moment—however I am thankful for the kind allowances you make for me & for the prospect of a remedy in the hope of seeing you—my dearest A—it is too kind of you to wish it & think of it—*I hope* & *think* I can spin out my stay till the time you mention—I had not determined *positively* to go next week—tho' I suppose towards the middle of it I might be at liberty to do so— — —I don't know what good I could do at home —except as far as regards my Bairns—perhaps I may be of more use here—where we have friends who are trying to do us good—if *we* will let them. I am most anxious to see you—& I do suppose you would not object to my mentioning your wish to see me here to my Husband—if you do—say so *truly*—& don't think y^{e} worse of me for venturing to say to you *I wish to see you* —I know not whether it may appear a want of *some* feeling—but indeed there is so much I have to say to

you which it w^d be endless to write—putting every other reason out of the question & there *are* many others dearest A—perhaps sadly *selfish* ones. I am very sorry to hear that L^y Gosford is so unwell, I have 1000 times intended begging you to say something in return for her kind message in y^r letter to Georgey—

How is y^r health my dearest A— & how is little A A —I will write again in a day or two—but I really think I may venture to say that my stay can be contrived very well—let me hear from you when you have a moment— I dine with M^rs Villiers to-day & will give y^r message— God bless you & believe me ever y^r most grateful & affec

A L

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

Lowestoft. Aug. 13—(1816).

My dear M^rs Villiers,

I desired A— to tell you I was decided to go to London by her remaining there, as I agree with you in thinking an interview particularly desirable—As I shall probably see her before you, I must again request to know your opinion on some points which I must be prepared to discuss—and in order that you may be enabled to judge, I will give you some extracts from her last letters.

[Extracts follow from Mrs. Leigh's letter of Aug. 5. —ED.]

I have deferred all further discussion till we meet— Now do you think I must then require the promise of her *never* voluntarily seeing him again, or shall I limit it to this that she will never see him at *his* house or her *own?*—

I shall put myself and bairn in a Lodging somewhere between Knightsbridge and Green Street which will be the principal attractions to me—and I will do as I would be done by, by *making use* of you—If anything should happen to prolong A's stay in Town, I should be glad

to have a little more time here. Have you heard I am turned Methodist ?—so I read in a letter from London a few days ago, and I hope I am not become an Antinomian (a sect which abounds here) for they hold that the more sins one commits the better chance one has of Heaven—

I am very glad that I shall see you—and not so miserably as when we last met.

Yours most affec[ly]
A. I. B.

THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

Knightsbridge
August 17th 1816.

My dear Lady Byron,

It does me good to think I shall see you so soon —and the thing that pleases me the most in A—— is her decided wish to stay to see you—She might so easily have avoided it as the Court attendance is over, & Mr. Leigh very cross at her being here—She had therefore ample pretence for going, (tho' I don't think her *empressement* to return to him great) but ever since you announced to her your intention of coming she has apparently been quite determined to stay—

. . . I found Lady Melbourne with A—— the other day—She (Ly. M.) seemed much annoyed at my entry, but as I did not think much good could come of *that* visit, I did not make a precipitate retreat but outstayed her—I asked no questions & A—— told me nothing of what she had said—She told me a few days ago she had had a letter from him that he had just read Glenarvon & only remarked that it was PRECIOUS STUFF [1]—I made little or no reply—this silence must astonish her & I am anxious to hear if she will remark upon it to you—I own I am NOW [1] very sanguine about her & have the greatest hopes that your approaching interview will complete her reformation I might almost say salvation—Pray let me

[1] Underlined twice.

know what day you come—Could I be of any use about a lodging for you ? I had not heard of your Methodistical turn—

God bless you my dear Lady B.
Yours ever most affectly.
T. V.

[On August 31st Lady Byron came to London and the interview took place in which Mrs. Leigh made the full confession described in Chapter III., p. 65.

I insert here a memorandum in Lady Byron's handwriting, undated, which was found with her correspondence of this time with Mrs. Leigh. It appears to me to be notes written by her preparatory to her interview with Mrs. Leigh.—ED.]

Undated [September ? 1816.]

Do you sorrow most for the sin or for the consequences? —for the offence towards God—or the injury towards your fellow-creatures ?

Do you sufficiently feel that every *thought* associated with such sin, is sinful, that the heart may be criminal though the actions are innocent ?—And that in *his* state of mind & after what has past all affection for you must be more or less of this kind, therefore in seeking to keep it alive, or even in allowing it as may have appeared to you innocently, you have encouraged his guilt of heart, and distanced his repentance—Are you sincerely resolved never to indulge him or yourself in this self-deceiving way again ? and strictly to confine your manifestations of Interest for him to what is required by the following considerations—provided they do not interfere with the determination of *never being again on terms of familiar affection with him*—

1. To prevent exasperating him to a disclosure—

2. To prevent such appearances as would tacitly disclose your relative circumstances—

Whenever you have any communication with him, question your own heart most scrupulously whether these be simply your objects—whether you are not deceived by the wish of still being dear to him, or by the dread of those consequences from *his* displeasure, which led you to incur God's anger—

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

[Undated.]

Dearest A

I am so sorry for your bad night—& for your *idea* of my *uncomfortableness*—which is however quite a *fancy of your own*—but I daresay I *looked* something or other which made you fancy. Pray have a good night & write me a 2[d] post note to say when I am likely to see you again, & tell me you are no longer sorry. I assure you I only feel & felt pleasure & comfort in seeing you &c., ALL [1] at least that I am now capable of feeling—

. . . . .

THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

The Lady Byron
Lower Seymour Street.

September 12th 1816.

My dear Ly. B.—

I have kept your servant unmercifully but unavoidably—

I *thought* I had ACTED [2] better than it seems I have done—yet perhaps it may turn out for the best—You ask my opinion & I hardly know what to say—for this is a new point of view—but *if you can* (I doubt the *possibility*) induce her to confide in me it would be *very* advisable—perhaps the only way of effecting this would be by offering to speak to me yourself, so that she should have no *confessions* to make—I think I should on my part only make the condition of being ask'd no questions as to the sources of my information, tho' I would assure

[1] Underlined twice.
[2] Underlined twice.

her, & with truth, that it came from quarters unconnected with *you*, and originating with him—you of course know I mean Lady G.[1] I can also with truth say that the reason of my being told was *kindness* to her to prevent my injuring her by over zeal—She *never must* know of any communication of yours—If she wd. consent to this it might be of use in your absence—perhaps—*as* she suspects my knowledge—otherwise it has always struck me that her knowing it was known by people who continued their affection for her *might* diminish her horror of the crime, wh. is already not *too* great—

If you can determine her to this measure I will be guided entirely by you as to my management of her—I will not see her to-day before I see you & will be with you before 4—I think Aunt S.[2] might be stopped by the mention of other facts than those wh. concern A—— but more of this when we meet—

Yrs ever & most affectionately
[Finishes at edge of paper.]

Lady Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Undated [September ? 1816.]

My dearest A——

Mrs. Villiers has just left me—I was not mistaken as to the subject of our conversation—She had attached no credit to the report but after you left Town before, had received detailed information *which originated with Lord B—— from an authority she could not doubt*—This she asserted upon her honour, though she requests not to be questioned as to the Informant, who was actuated by no other motive than to prevent her from precipitating you into greater dangers by her imprudent & ignorant zeal—She has since acted the part she thought most friendly towards you, avoiding the duplicity of appearing to have any feeling towards him but horror, which was much increased by his treachery—I need not dwell upon her feelings towards you—Grief is the pre-

[1] Probably Lady Granville.
[2] Sophia Byron.

dominant one—She wished to consult with me, and also to make me the medium of this communication to you, being herself too ill at present to undertake a conversation with you upon it—She wishes to be spared in this respect, but will see you before you leave Town or not as you are inclined, and desires you to consider her as a friend whom in any emergency you may turn to, & consult—as you have formerly done—and that she will write to you unreservedly when Col: L—— is absent—

This is the substance of what past—I *hope* I said for you all that you would think right—and I trust it is better that I should have been consulted by her—Believe me she is truly kind (though her feeling is very deep)—More to-morrow—Pray come early—God bless & protect you & yours—

A I B

I have read the lines [1] to you—& think they ought not to be seen by any one—

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LADY BYRON.

White Hall
Thursday Night
[September 12, 1816.]

Dearest A.

I scarcely know what to say except that I will be with you EARLY [2] to-morrow—& that I am grateful to you & to M^rs^ V—— I don't think I *can* see her—& yet I wish you not to say so—and in fact I can't just now say *what* I wish—If you have *the lines*, keep them. God bless you—

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

[Endorsed by Mrs. Villiers] Septr. 1816.

My dear Mrs. Villiers—

A—— is with me—and wishes me to express her most grateful sense of all your kindness, on which she will not trespass by any thing that could agitate you in

[1] Epistle to Augusta. See Appendix F.
[2] Underlined twice.

your present state—and will therefore decline your friendly offer of calling upon her to-day—at the same time that she feels great comfort in the hope of hearing from you—Thank you once more for all your consideration for me—& still more for her & believe me,

Ever yours most affectly.,
A. I. B.

The above was written under A's inspection—I have only to add that I see all I could wish in her towards you—& the humblest sense of her own situation—I have told her from you that the informant you alluded to was no relation of hers—& she will not enquire further—I have settled with Murray to cut out those lines & give them to *her*—She has shown me of her own accord *his* letters to her—having only suppressed them because of the bitterness towards me—they are *absolute love letters* —and she wants to know how she can stop them—No more time—But you shall hear from E. Farm.

LADY BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS.

E. Farm.[1]
Septr. 14 (1816).

My dear Mrs. Villiers—I am inclined, on consideration, to apprehend some disadvantages in a communication to the Wilmots—and my reasons are chiefly from the nature of Mr W's character—His defect certainly is vanity, and I suspect *that* might be wounded by her having placed confidence in any one, besides myself, preferably to him & Mrs W—— Now I am sure it is not her wish to extend it to them, and I see no good, on the contrary harm, in her ever thinking them in possession of it—Mr W—— did injury before, without meaning it, to *her* state of feelings, by trying to alarm instead of softening—of this I am now thoroughly convinced—He requires to be softened himself, and had not the *tact* which makes good intentions acceptable to people's feelings—With very useful executive powers in the time

[1] Lord Auckland's house—Eden Farm.

of action, he cannot lay them aside in the time of rest, and when things had better be left to take their own course, is always wanting to do something—of these facts I wish to make you aware for the future benefit of all parties—

A—— consults me with the deepest feeling upon this point—whether she did not owe it to you *voluntarily* to renounce all connection with you, for your future sake—in case of any disclosure—and I really believe she would sacrifice any thing to prevent your suffering by your generosity—I told her that as a wife and mother I thought she ought to avail herself of your friendship—The knowledge that you *could* & *would* forgive her transgressions only seemed to humble her more—I have nothing to regret in my own conduct towards her, at least I hope not, except that I was at one time inclined to adopt Mr. W's system—

Do you not think you have *reason* to write to Lady G——[1] and soften her ?—

The effect of knowing that she was still further betrayed, was such as made her determine at first never to write to him again—but this is not to be desired—nor any violent resolution—I only mention it as it shows the feelings you wished to arise—

I cannot say with how much satisfaction, though of a melancholy kind in some respects, I review my visit to Town—in the hope of its having contributed something to the welfare & comfort of those who are dear to me—and amongst such friends I can never forget you—

Yours most affectly.,
A. I. B.

THE HON. MRS. GEO. VILLIERS TO LADY BYRON.

[1 South Place. Knightsbridge]
Sunday [September 15, 1816]

You misunderstood me dear Lady B. I never meant that the Wilmots should know what had passed between

[1] Lady Granville.

Augusta & *me*—the question I asked you related entirely to what had passed between A. & YOU [1]—the knowledge of which would I thought tend to soften him—& as I thought it possible that I might see them before you would, I wished to ask you whether there should be any and what restrictions to my communication as to what had passed with you.

I am persuaded you see M^r W's character in a very true light—I have long been convinced that Vanity was his weak point—His conduct towards you when called upon to interfere gave me a good impression of his head and heart—& I think there is a great deal of *agrément* in his society but I think his sarcasms can be very bitter —& bitterness at this moment towards poor A would be a cruelty. I have more difficulty in making out M^rs W's character as she is more reserved—but at all events you may rely on my never communicating to either what has recently passed between A & me and of which I must tell you more—

When I got your note and found she declined seeing me I felt I was doing unkindly by her, & I could not reconcile myself to it—I thought she would always have a dread of our first meeting and it was selfish in me to put it off.

I therefore wrote her a *very* long letter from the impulse of the moment assuring her that as my compassion had been excited & my affection not alienated when I first heard *for truth*, all that I had so long rejected with scorn, it was not likely to be so *now* that I knew from you that she was all that we could wish and all that I trusted she w^d ever be—I told her that I considered her the Victim to the most infernal plot that had ever entered the heart of man to conceive, that I wish'd I could think the Plot was over, but I was positive it was not—that I warned her to be on her guard & that the best precaution she could take was unbounded unreserved confidence in you —that not a letter—a note—a word should pass between her & him without being submitted to you—that you

[1] Underlined twice.

were her Guardian angel & the only person who could assist her to counteract the execrable villany of the other. I told her that my horror, my detestation, my execration of the person who had beguiled & betrayed her exceeded all my powers of expression and that with the exception of forgiveness no other feelings than those I described *could*, *should* or *ought* to exist in her mind towards him—I hope you will not think me wrong in speaking of him in such strong terms but I thought it well she sh^{d} be impressed with the idea that such MUST [1] be the feelings of those who knew such facts. I told her that I w^{d} call upon her for a minute in the course of the day but I w^{d} not talk on the subject—I went accordingly —She commanded herself better than I expected very kind in her manner & evidently wished to dine with me —I therefore pressed it. My aunt brought her & carried her home and Georgy too—we had no conversation— M^{r} V. was particularly kind to her & she got on very well—She gave me the enclosed note which pray burn when read—I own I am *very* glad this has passed—I am glad she was horror struck with his further treachery— all this will help to alienate her feelings from him—I spoke very strongly of those lines to her—I wonder whether he still possesses many of her former letters to him—They alone would be proof positive—& he may certainly turn them against her if his revenge is roused— his word only would hardly succeed now—I think you have great reason my dear L^{y} B. to rejoice in your efforts to save this unfortunate being, for I do really believe & hope they will be rewarded by success—I am going to L^{d} Clarendon's today and shall not return till tomorrow Ev^{g} at the End of the week I believe we go to Worthing —but always direct here—and pray write soon

Most affectionately Y^{rs} ever

T V

[1] Underlined twice.

LADY BYRON AND MRS. LEIGH (II)

The Hon. Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.

S. M. B.
Tuesday [September] 17th [1816]

Dearest A——

Your letter has given me the greatest comfort and I do not dread *your* misunderstanding my *un*-expressed feelings towards you—for all your kindness & consideration—I am glad to think I have anticipated your advice as much as possible by endeavouring to avoid a recurrence to the past—it has certainly been very unsuccessfully as yet—*I* can't understand the inconsistency of his fears—& his actions constantly tending to realize them!! Thank you 100000 times my own dear Sis—for *all* your kind thoughts for me—I shall be glad that you see Mrs V again I have a *very* great dread of *her* thinking me a perfect *stone!* & perhaps she will believe *you* that I am not—I feel I can't undeceive her—for the more *anxious* I am—the less I am able—She terms you my *Guardian Angel* & I am sure you are so—Towards *another* person—she is *very* violent in her expressions of resentment—& it is I daresay very natural but I think it better not to say a word in answer—tho' in fact *I* am the one *much* the most to blame—& *quite* inexcusable[1]—You know—I trust—that I am anxious to make every atonement—& will assist me—Your suspicions—Do they particularly allude to *my own* Maid? I have thought of that, but can't perceive any cause for them there; the great partiality always manifested towards him I think wd prove that—but my blindness about other things as you say ought to make me more watchful. I arrived safe on Saturday—& found things better in some ways than I expected—the alarm I hinted at to you was *nothing*—the *Spirits* better than they have been for some time but without any particular reason, for *affairs* are ye same—so of course *durability* can't be expected. He is gone to-day into

[1] Nearly three years before, Byron had written to Lady Melbourne of Augusta: "it was not her fault"; and had begged Lady Melbourne not to speak so harshly of her to him, "the cause of all."

Hertfordshire till Friday or Saturday—yesterday—rode to meet Lord & L^y *D*[1] in their way North—they are lately returned from *Geneva* & were told very seriously that I was there disguised as a *Page*—their informer could not be persuaded that it was not so—Pray my dearest A do you think that the allusions in *C H*[2]—can do any harm—I did not read them—I have not heard from Murray in answer. When I write to B. it will be as you advise—Do not show the letter I sent you to M^rs V. I should think it wrong to any but you—My Guardian Angel!

I am not sure whether yr letter was read—but it was exactly the sort of thing to have made the best impression—how kind in you dearest A. there was an enquiry as I expected as to your reception & manner &c—I replied as we had agreed w^d be best which was quite satisfactory—I have no time for more now—but believe dearest all I would say for yr kindness—& do write to me—say how you & Ada are—Georgey sends her love—

Ever yr most grateful & affec.
A. L.

[1] Darlington.
[2] "Childe Harold."

CHAPTER XI

ADDITIONAL LETTERS: BYRON AND AUGUSTA

THE HON. MRS. LEIGH TO LORD BYRON.

(Enclosing hair.)

The
Lord Byron
4 Bennet Street
St. James's
London.

[seal: "Augusta"]

[Post Mark]
Newmarket
Free
29 NO 29
1813

Partager tous vos sentimens
ne voir que par vos yeux
n'agir que par vos conseils, ne
vivre que pour vous, voila mes
voeux, mes projets, & le seul
destin qui peut me rendre
heureuse——

[Enclosed is a small packet containing a lock of fine dark brown hair tied with white silk. Inside the paper of the packet, and underneath the lock of hair, is written in autograph:

AUGUSTA

On the outside of the paper containing the hair is written by Lord Byron]:

La Chevelure of
the *one* whom I
most *loved* +

[Of the following thirty-four letters, thirty-one are to Mrs. Leigh and three to Lady Byron. Of these I

possess in most cases both the original letters and Lady Byron's copies from them, which she took under the advice of Colonel Doyle and Dr. Lushington, whose anxiety to guard against any future misrepresentation of facts has been already described.[1] Some of these originals are from Lady Byron's papers and some from a packet given many years ago by the late Mr. Murray [2] to Lord Lovelace and his sister. Mr. Murray, who had been a generous creditor to Mrs. Leigh in the distresses of her later years, bought these letters after her death from her heirs. It has been possible to supply some lost portions and erasures, made by Mrs. Leigh, from Lady Byron's copies.

The letter of July 20, 1819, to Lady Byron may perhaps give the false impression that, after their parting, he wrote to her frequently and on indifferent matters. That is far from being the case. But since she has been supposed to have been unsympathetic to him on the subject of his poetry, it is worth noting how—the pen once in hand—he recurred naturally to the old habit of talking to her about the scenery and subjects of his verse.

I have made no attempt to reproduce the dashes, which (in all the letters that I have seen) Byron habitually used instead of punctuation marks; nor the peculiar method of apparently doubling the letter "s"—so that, for instance, "yours" becomes "yourss"—which he adopted in his later years.[3]—Ed.]

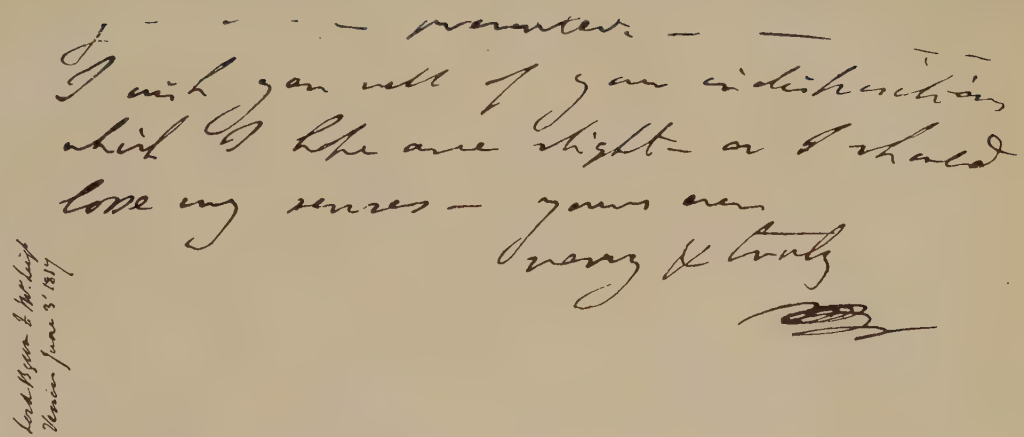
Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Diodati Aug^{t} 27th 1816.

[First line scratched out]

Your confidential letter is safe, and all the others. This one has cut me to the heart because I have made you uneasy. Still I think all these apprehensions—very groundless. Who can care for such a wretch as C^{e} ——,[4]

[1] See Chap. II., p. 46, and Chap. III., p. 59.
[2] Father of the present head of the firm.
[3] See Chap. V., p. 111.
[4] Lady Caroline Lamb.



FACSIMILE OF CLOSING LINES OF BYRON'S LETTER OF JUNE 3RD, 1817 (WITH SIGNATURE), TO MRS. LEIGH.

or believe such a seventy times convicted liar ? and in the next place, whatever she may suppose or assert—I never "committed" any one to her but *myself*. And as to her fancies—she fancies any thing—and every body —Lady M——[1] &c &c Really this is starting at shadows. You distress me with—no—it is not *you*. But I have heard that Lady B—— is ill, & I am so sorry —but it's of no use—do not mention her again—but I shall not forget her kindness to you.

I am going to Chamouni (to leave my card with Mont Blanc) and I mean to buy some pretty granite & spar playthings for children (which abound there) for my daughter—and my nieces—You will forward what I select to little Da—& divide the rest among your own. I shall send them by Scrope; this goes by another person. I shall write more and longer soon.

do not be uneasy—and do not "hate yourself" if you hate either let it be *me*—but do not—it would kill me; we are the last persons in the world—who ought—or could cease to love one another.

Ever dearest thine[2]
+ B

P.S. I send a note to Georgiana. I do not understand all your mysteries about "the verses" & the Asterisks; but if the name is not put asterisks always are, & I see nothing remarkable in this. I have heard nothing but praises of those lines.

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Diodati—Geneva
Sept. 8th 1816.

My dearest Augusta,

By two opportunities of private conveyance I have sent answers to your letter delivered by Mr. H.[3] S——[4] is on his return to England and may probably

[1] Lady Melbourne.
[2] For facsimile of signature, see p. 286.
[3] Hobhouse.
[4] Scrope Davies.

arrive before this. He is charged with a few packets of seals—necklaces—balls &c. &—I know not what—formed of Chrystals, Agates, and other stones, *all of* them *from Mont Blanc* bought and brought by me on and from the spot—expressly for you to divide among yourself and the children, including also your niece Ada, for whom I selected a ball (of Granite—a *soft* substance by the way—but the only one there) wherewithall to roll and play when she is old enough, and mischievous enough, & moreover a Chrystal necklace; and anything else you may like to add for her—the love!

The rest are for you and the nursery, but particularly Georgiana, who has sent me a very nice letter. I hope Scrope will carry them all safely, as he promised. There are seals and all kinds of fooleries, pray like them, for they come from a very curious place (nothing like it *hardly* in all I ever saw) to say nothing of the giver.

And so—Lady B. has been "kind to you" you tell me—"very kind"—umph—it is as well she should be kind to some of us, and I am glad she has the heart & the discernment to be still *your* friend; you was ever so to her. I heard the other day that she was very unwell. I was shocked enough—& sorry enough, God knows, but never mind; H. tells me however that she is *not* ill; that she *had* been indisposed, but is better and well to do—This is a relief. As for me I am in good health, & fair, though very unequal spirits; but for all that—she—or rather the Separation—has broken my heart. I feel as if an Elephant had trodden on it. I am convinced I shall never get over it—but I try. I had enough before I knew her and more than enough, but time & agitation had done something for me; but this last wreck has affected me very differently. If it were *acutely* it would not signify; but it is not that—I breathe lead. While the storm lasted and you were all pitying and comforting me with condemnation in Piccadilly, it was bad enough & violent enough, but it's

worse now; I have neither strength nor spirits nor inclination to carry me through anything which will clear my brain or lighten my heart. I mean to cross the Alps at the end of this month, & go—God knows where—by Dalmatia up to the Arnauts again, if nothing better can be done; I have still a world before me—this—or the next. H—— has told me all the strange stories in circulation of me & mine—*not* true.[1] I have been in some danger on the lake (near Meillerie) but nothing to speak of; and as to all these "mistresses"—Lord help me—I have had but one. Now don't scold—but what could I do? A foolish girl, in spite of all I could say or do, would come after me, or rather went before for I found her here, and I have had all the plague possible to persuade her to go back again, but at last she went. Now dearest, I do most truly tell thee that I could not help this, that I did all I could to prevent it, and have at last put an end to it. I was not in love nor have any love left for any, but I could not exactly play the Stoic with a woman who had scrambled eight hundred miles to unphilosophize me, besides I had been regaled of late with so many "two courses and a *desert*" (Alas!) of aversion, that I was fain to take a little love (if pressed particularly) by way of novelty. And now you know all that I know of that matter, & it's over. Pray write, I have heard nothing since your last, at least a month or five weeks ago. I go out very little, except into the *air*, and on journeys, and on the water, and to Coppet, where M^e^ de Stäel has been particularly kind and friendly towards me, and (I hear) fought battles without number in my very indifferent cause. It has (they say) made quite as much noise on this as the other side of "La Manche"—Heaven knows why, but I seem destined to set people by the ears.

Don't hate me, but believe me ever
Yrs. most affec^ly^
B

[1] From here the latter half of this letter is printed in "Letters and Journals," Vol. III., p. 347.

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Sept. 14th 1816.

My dearest Augusta—

The paper with the initials came safely with your letter, but the hair was either omitted or had slipt out. You may be sure I looked everywhere carefully, but I suppose you in your hurry forgot it. Pray send (or save for me) two or three—but tie them with a *thread*—or wrap them in a manner more liable to security.

I have written to you lately *thrice*, *twice* by private conveyance & once by post. This is the fourth since the letter you mention.

Your having seen my daughter is to me a great satisfaction; it is as if I had seen her myself. Next to you—dearest—she is nearly all I have to look forward to with hope or pleasure in this world. Perhaps she also may disappoint & distress me, but I will not think so; in any case she will at least love me—or my memory.

By Mr Davies I sent you for yourself—little Da—& my nieces, a variety of Chrystal & other trinkets from Mont Blanc & Chamouni, which I got upon the spot for you all. I hope they will arrive safely.

In my last letter I mentioned to you the origin of the stories about "mistresses." As to "pages"—there be none such—nor any body else. Such assertions and reports find their own remedy sooner or later.

If I understand you rightly, you seem to have been apprehensive—or menaced (like every one else) by that infamous Bedlamite [erased][1]—If she stirs against you, neither her folly nor her falsehood should or shall protect her. Such a monster as that *has no sex*, and should live no longer.

But till such an event should occur, you may rely that I shall remain as quiet as the most unbounded Contempt of her, and my affection for you & regard for your feelings can make me. I should never think of her nor her infamies, but that they seem (I know not why) to make you uneasy. What 'tis she may tell or what she may

[1] Caroline Lamb.

know or pretend to know—is to me indifferent. You know I suppose that Lady B^n^ *secretly opened my letter trunks before she left Town, and that* she *has also been* (*during* or since the separation) in *correspondence with* that self-avowed libeller & strumpet [erased][1] wife. This you may depend upon though I did not know it till recently.

Upon such conduct I am utterly at a loss to make a single comment—beyond every expression of astonishment. I am past indignation.

There is perhaps a chance of your seeing me in Spring, as I said before I left England ; but it is useless to form plans, and most of all for me to do so. I may say (as Whitbread said to me of his own a short time before his decease), that " none of mine ever succeeded."

We purpose making a short tour to the Berne Alps next week, and then to return here and cross the Simplon to Milan. Your letters had better be always directed to *Geneva Poste Restante* and my banker (Mr. Hentsch, a very attentive and good man), will take care to forward them, wherever I may be.

I have answered Georgiana's letter & am very glad she likes her little cousin. How came Ada's hair *fair ?* —she will be like her mother and torture me. However if she is kind to you—and when the time comes—if she will continue so, it is enough.

I do not write to you in good spirits, and I cannot pretend to be so, but I have no *near* nor *immediate* cause of being thus, but as it is ; I only request you will say nothing of this to Hobhouse by letter or message, as I wish to wear as quiet an appearance with him as possible ; —besides I am in good health & well without.

The Jerseys are here ; I am to see them soon. Mad^e^ de Stäel still very kind & hospitable, but Rocca (to whom she is privately married) is not well, with some old wounds badly cured.

If I see anything very striking in the Mountains I will tell thee. To Scrope I leave the details of Chamouni

[1] Wm. Lamb's.

& the Glaciers & the sources of the Aveiron. This country is altogether the Paradise of Wilderness—I wish you were in it with me—& every one else out of it—Love me, A., ever thine—

B.

[Mrs. Leigh wrote about the above letter to Lady Byron :

" *Sept.* 27. The first sentence relates to 2 or 3 *hairs* of a *Great Man*, which I sent by way of curiosity " . . .

" And then about *you* my dearest A—— Do you know I'm sorry to suspect Fletcher of that communication—for no one else *could* " . . .

" I will tell you what I have answered which was very little . . . in answer to the accusations—y^e^ first—'Who could tell him *such a thing!* which I *could not believe*'" . . .

" *Sept.* 30. Do tell me if I can do anything about *you* for I cant tell you the grief it is to me his having such ideas—IF [1] *he really has them*—I *sometimes* indeed *often* think it a *real* madness and you know not how I have been doomed to witness this *perverted* way of seeing things—*not only* in *him*—thinking real friends enemies—right—*wrong*—and so on " . . .

" About the Trunks—Could not I say something true to contradict such a vile Calumny! Do advise me—and consider yourself as what I consider *most* " . . .

Lady Byron answered :

" *Oct.* 2. . . . All that is said of CL appears to me nothing but the effect of apprehension—and the design to blacken me by association with her (which will however make me more cautious) is another effect of fear in order to invalidate any future disclosure which he may suspect or know it is in my power to make so as to convince others—the temper of the whole letter is decidedly that of a conscience enraged by anticipating judgment *here* as well as *hereafter*—and which by way of precaution against the former would persecute un-

[1] Underlined twice.

relentingly all whom he has *made* to know him—From this view his *adoption* (if not invention) of my being a *Picklock* is easily explained—for such a suspicion of my means of information would entirely discredit my testimony—But there also seems another disposition in parts of the letter—to alarm and annoy *you* notwithstanding the professed feelings of consideration and affection—This is evident in the hint about Whitbread—(the old threat of Suicide)—and I think also in this very suggestion of my having opened his papers—*letters of yours* probably——" . . .

"To return once more to CL—I never wrote *a single line* to her from the time of my separation till that note of which you know merely declining her visit—so that the story of a correspondence is utterly false." . . .

—Ed.]

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Ouchy. Sept 17. 1816

My dearest Augusta,

I am thus far on my way to the Bernese Alps & the Grindenwald, and the *Yung frau* (that is the "Wild woman" being interpreted—as it is so perverse a mountain that no other sex would suit it), which journey may occupy me about eight days or so, and then it is my intention to return to Geneva, preparatory to passing the Simplon——

Continue you to direct as usual to Geneva. I have lately written to you several letters (3 or 4 by post and two by hand) and I have received all yours very safely. I rejoice to have heard that you are well. You have been in London too lately, & H. tells me that at your levée he generally found L^d F. Bentinck—pray why is that fool so often a visitor? is he in love with you? I have recently broken through my resolution of not speaking to you of Lady B— but do not on that account name her to me. It is a relief—a partial relief to me to talk of her sometimes to you—but it would be none to hear of her. *Of* her you are to judge for yourself,

but do not altogether forget that she has destroyed your brother. Whatever my faults might or may have been —*She*—was not the person marked out by providence to be their avenger. One day or another her conduct will recoil on her own head ; *not* through *me*, for my feelings towards her are not those of Vengeance, but—mark—if she does not end miserably *tot ou tard*. She may think —talk—or act as she will, and by any process of cold reasoning and a jargon of " duty & acting for the best " &c., &c., impose upon her own feelings & those of others for a time—but woe unto her—the wretchedness she has brought upon the man to whom she has been everything evil [except in one effaced respect] will flow back into its fountain. I may thank the strength of my constitution that has enabled me to bear all this, but those who bear the longest and the most do not suffer the least. I do not think a human being could endure more mental torture than that woman has directly & indirectly inflicted upon me—within the present year.

She has (for a time at least) separated me from my child—& from you—but I turn from the subject for the present.

To-morrow I repass Clarens & Vevey ; if in the new & more extended tour I am making, anything that I think may please you occurs, I will detail it.

Scrope has by this time arrived with my little presents for you and yours & Ada. I still hope to be able to see you next Spring, perhaps you & one or two of the children could be spared some time next year for a little tour *here* or in France with me of a month or two. I think I could make it pleasing to you, & it should be no expense to L. or to yourself. Pray think of this hint. You have no idea how very beautiful great part of this country is —and *women* and *children* traverse it with ease and expedition. I would return from any distance at any time to see you, and come to England for you ; and when you consider the chances against our—but I won't relapse into the dismals and anticipate long absences——

The great obstacle would be that you are so admirably

yoked—and necessary as a housekeeper—and a letter writer—& a place-hunter to that very helpless gentleman your Cousin, that I suppose the usual self-love of an elderly person would interfere between you & any scheme of recreation or relaxation, for however short a period.

What a fool was I to marry—and *you* not very wise—my dear—we might have lived so single and so happy—as old maids and bachelors; I shall never find any one like you—nor you (vain as it may seem) like me. We are just formed to pass our lives together, and therefore—we—at least—I—am by a crowd of circumstances removed from the only being who could ever have loved me, or whom I can unmixedly feel attached to.

Had you been a Nun—and I a Monk—that we might have talked through a grate instead of across the sea—no matter—my voice and my heart are

ever thine—
B

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Diodati. October 1st 1816.

My dearest Augusta,—

Two days ago I sent you in three letter-covers a journal[1] of a mountain-excursion lately made by me & Mr H.[2] in the Bernese Alps. I kept it on purpose for you thinking it might amuse you. Since my return here I have heard by an indirect Channel that Lady B. is better, or well. It is also said that she has some intention of passing the winter on the Continent. Upon this subject I want a word or two, and as you are—I understand—on terms of acquaintance with her again you will be the properest channel of communication from me to her. It regards my child. It is far from my intention now or at any future period (without misconduct on her part which I should be grieved to anticipate),

[1] "Letters and Journals," Vol. III., p. 349.
[2] Hobhouse.

to attempt to withdraw my child from its mother. I think it would be harsh; & Though it is a very deep privation to me to be withdrawn from the contemplation and company of my little girl, still I would not purchase even this so very dearly; but I must strongly protest against my daughter's leaving England, to be taken over the Continent at so early a time of life & subjected to many unavoidable risks of health & comfort; more especially in so unsettled a state as we know the greater part of Europe to be in at this moment. I do not choose that my girl should be educated like Lord Yarmouth's son (or run the chance of it which a war would produce), and I make it my personal & particular request to Lady Byron that—in the event of her quitting England—the child should be left in the care of proper persons. I have no objection to its remaining with Lady Noel & Sir Ralph, (who would naturally be fond of it), but my distress of mind would be very much augmented if my daughter quitted England without my consent or approbation. I beg that you will lose no time in making this known to Lady B. and I hope you will say something to enforce my request, I have no wish to trouble her more than can be helped. My whole hope—and prospect of a quiet evening (if I reach it), are wrapt up in that little creature—Ada—and you must forgive my anxiety in all which regards her even to minuteness. My journal will have told you all my recent wanderings. I am very well though I had a little accident yesterday. Being in my boat in the evening the pole of the mainsail slipped in veering round, & struck me on a nerve of one of my legs so violently as to make me faint away. M^r H^e & cold water brought me to myself, but there was no damage done—no bone hurt—and I have now no pain whatever. Some nerve or tendon was jarred—for a moment & that was all. To-day I dine at Coppet; the Jerseys are I believe to be there. Believe me ever & truly my own dearest Sis. most affectionately and entirely yours

B

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Milan Oct^r 15. 1816.

My dearest Augusta

I have been at Churches, Theatres, libraries, and picture galleries. The Cathedral is noble, the theatre grand, the library excellent, and the galleries I know nothing about—except as far as liking one picture out of a thousand. What has delighted me most is a manuscript collection (preserved in the Ambrosian library), of original love-letters and verses of Lucretia de Borgia & Cardinal Bembo; and a lock of her hair—so long—and fair & beautiful—and the letters so pretty & so loving that it makes one wretched not to have been born sooner to have at least seen her. And pray what do you think is one of her *signatures?*—why this + a Cross—which she says "is to stand for her name &c." Is not this amusing? I suppose you know that she was a famous beauty, & famous for the use she made of it; & that she was the love of this same Cardinal Bembo (besides a story about her papa Pope Alexander & her brother Cæsar Borgia—which some people don't believe—& others do), and that after all she ended with being Duchess of Ferrara, and an excellent mother & wife also; so good as to be quite an example. All this may or may not be, but the hair & the letters are so beautiful that I have done nothing but pore over them, & have made the librarian promise me a copy of some of them; and I mean to get some of the hair if I can. The verses are Spanish—the letters Italian—some signed—others with a cross—but all in her own hand-writing.

I am so hurried, & so sleepy, but so anxious to send you even a few lines my dearest Augusta, that you will forgive me troubling you so often; and I shall write again soon; but I have sent you so much lately, that you will have too many perhaps. *A thousand loves* to *you* from *me*—which is very generous for I only ask *one* in return

Ever dearest thine

B

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Milan. Oct^r 26^th 1816.

My dearest Augusta—

It is a month since the date of your last letter—but you are not to suppose that your letters do not arrive. All the assertions of the post being impeded are (I believe) false; and the faults of their non-arrival are in those who write, (or rather do not write) not in the conveyance. I have hitherto written to you very regularly, indeed rather perhaps too often, but I now tell you that I will not write again at all, if I wait so long for my answers. I have received no less than three letters from one person all dated within *this month* of Oct^r, so that it cannot be the fault of the post, and as to the address—I particularly stated *Geneva*, as usual poste restante, or to the care of Mons^r Hentsch Banquier Geneva—perhaps the latter is safest. I mention all this—not from any wish to plague you—but because [my unfortunate effaced] circumstances perhaps make me feel more keenly anything which looks like neglect; and as among my faults towards you, *that* at least has not been one, even in that in which I am often negligent—viz.—letter writing—pray do not set me the example, lest I follow it.

I have written twice since my arrival at Milan and once before I left Geneva. My Diodati letter contained some directions about my daughter Ada, and I hope you received that letter & fulfilled my request as far as regards my child. I wish also to know if Scrope delivered the things entrusted to him by me, as I have no news of that illustrious personage. Milan has been an agreeable residence to me, but we propose going on to Venice next week. You will address however as usual (to my bankers) to Geneva. I have found a good many of the noble as well as literary classes of society intelligent, & very kind & attentive to strangers. I have seen all the sights, & last night among others heard an Improvisatore recite, a very celebrated one, named Sgricchi. It is not an amusing though a curious effort of human powers. I

enclose you a letter of Monti (who is here & whom I know), the most famous Italian poet now living, as a specimen of his handwriting. If there are any of your acquaintance fond of collecting such things you may give it to them ; it is not addressed to me.

I shall write again before I set out
believe me ever & truly
Yrs

B

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Octr 28th 1816.—

My dearest Augusta—

Two days ago I wrote you the enclosed[1] but the arrival of your letter of the 12th has revived me a little, so pray forgive the apparent "*humeur*" of the other, which I do not tear up—from lazyness—and the hurry of the post as I have hardly time to write another at present.

I really do not & cannot understand all the mysteries & alarms in your letters & more particularly in the last. All I know is—that no human power short of destruction —shall prevent me from seeing you when—where —& how—I may please—according to time & circumstance ; that you are the only comfort (except the remote possibility of my daughter's being so) left me in prospect in existence, and that I can bear the rest—so that you remain ; but anything which is to divide us would drive me quite out of my senses ; Miss Milbanke appears in all respects to have been formed for my destruction ; I have thus far—as you know—regarded her without feelings of personal bitterness towards her, but if directly or indirectly—but why do I say this ?—You know she is the cause of all—whether intentionally or not is little to the purpose———You surely do not mean to say that if I come to England in Spring, that you & I shall not meet ? If so I will never return to it—though I must for many

[1] The preceding letter.

reasons—business &c &c—But I quit this topic for the present.

My health is good, but I have now & then fits of giddiness, & deafness, which make me think like Swift—that I shall be like him & the *withered* tree he saw—which occasioned the reflection and " die at top " first. My hair is growing grey, & *not* thicker ; & my teeth are sometimes *looseish* though still white & sound. Would not one think I was sixty instead of not quite nine & twenty ? To talk thus—Never mind—either this must end—or I must end—but I repeat it again & again—*that woman* has destroyed me.

Milan has been made agreeable by much attention and kindness from many of the natives ; but the whole tone of Italian society is so different from yours in England ; that I have not time to describe it, tho' I am not sure that I do not prefer it. Direct as usual to Geneva—hope the best—& love me the most—as I ever must love you.

B

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Venice. Dec^r 18^th 1816.

My dearest Augusta—

I have received one letter dated 19^th Nov^r I think (or rather earlier by a week or two perhaps), since my arrival in Venice, where it is my intention to remain probably till the Spring. The place pleases me. I have found some pleasing society—& the *romance* of the situation—& it's extraordinary appearance—together with all the associations we are accustomed to connect with Venice, have always had a charm for me, even before I arrived here ; and I have not been disappointed in what I have seen.

I go every morning to the Armenian Convent (of *friars not Nuns*—my child) to study the language, I mean the *Armenian* language, (for as you perhaps know—I am versed in the Italian which I speak with fluency rather

than accuracy), and if you ask me my reason for studying this out of the way language—I can only answer that it is Oriental and difficult, & employs me—which are—as you know my Eastern & difficult way of thinking—reasons sufficient. Then I have fallen in love with a very pretty Venetian of two & twenty,[1] with great black eyes. She is married—and so am I—which is very much to the purpose. We have formed and sworn an eternal attachment, which has already lasted a lunar month, & I am more in love than ever, & so is the lady—at least she says so. She does not plague me (which is a wonder) and I verily believe we are one of the happiest—unlawful couples on this side of the Alps. She is very handsome, very Italian or rather Venetian, with something more of the Oriental cast of countenance; accomplished and musical after the manner of her nation. Her spouse is a very good kind of man who occupies himself elsewhere, and thus the world goes on here as elsewhere. This adventure came very opportunely to console me, for I was beginning to be "like Sam Jennings very *unappy*" but at present—at least for a month past—I have been very tranquil, very loving, & have not so much embarassed myself with the tortures of the last two years and that virtuous monster Miss Milbanke, who had nearly driven me out of my senses.—[curse her effaced][2]

Hobhouse is gone to Rome with his brother and sister—but returns here in February: you will easily suppose that I was not disposed to stir from my present position.

I have not heard recently from England & wonder if Murray has published the po's sent to him; & I want to know if you don't think them very fine & all that—Goosey my love—don't they make you "put finger in eye?"

You can have no idea of my thorough wretchedness from the day of my parting from you till nearly a month ago though I struggled against it with some strength. At present I am better—thank Heaven above—&

[1] Marianna (or Marianina) Segati.
[2] The erasure is probably by Mrs. Leigh.

woman beneath—and I will be a very good boy. Pray remember me to the babes, & tell me of little *Da*—who by the way—is a year old and a few days over.

My love to you all & to Aunt *Sophy*[1]: pray tell *her* in particular that I have consoled myself; and tell Hodgson that his prophecy is accomplished. He said—you remember—I should be in love with an Italian—so I am.—

ever dearest yrs.

B.

P.S. I forgot to tell you—that the *Demoiselle*[2]—who returned to England from Geneva—went there to produce a new baby B., who is now about to make his appearance. You wanted to hear some adventures—there are enough I think for one epistle.——Pray address direct to Venice —Poste Restante.

Lord Byron to Mrs. Leigh.

Venice Jan^{y} 13th 1817.

My dearest Augusta.

I wrote to you *twice* within the last and present months. Your letter of the 24th arrived to-day. So you have got the po's. Pray tell me if Murray has omitted any stanzas in the publication; if he has I shall be very seriously displeased with him. The number sent was *118* to the 3^{d} Canto.[3] You do not mention the concluding *4* to my daughter Ada which I hoped would give *you* pleasure at least. I care not much about opinions at this time of day, and I am certain in my mind that this Canto is the *best* which I have ever written; there is depth of thought in it throughout and a strength of repressed passion which you must feel before you find; but it requires reading more than once, because it is in part *metaphysical*, and of a kind of metaphysics which every body will not understand. I

[1] Sophia Byron.

[2] Jane Clairmont, step-daughter of William Godwin. See "Letters and Journals," Vol. III., pp. 347 and 427.

[3] Of "Childe Harold."

never thought that it would be *popular* & should not think well of it if it were, but those for whom it is intended will like it. Pray remember to tell me if any have been omitted in the publication. The lines on Drachenfels originally addressed to *you*, ought to be (& I suppose *are*) in the centre of the Canto—and the number of Stanzas in the whole *118*—besides *4* of ten lines beginning with " Drachenfels " the lines which I sent to *ou* (sic) at the time from Coblentz—with the violets dearest +.

Have you also got *Chillon* & the *Dream* & do you understand the latter ?

If Murray has mutilated the MS. with his *Toryism*, or his notions about *family* considerations I shall not pardon him & am sure to know it sooner or later & to let him know it also.

I wrote to you the other day about Ada, if the *answer* is still refused I shall take *legal measures* to enforce it, and have ordered H.[1] to do so. *Remember I* do not seek this, I wish it not, I regret it, but I require an explicit promise that Ada shall on no consideration quit the country, whether the mother does or no, and by all that is most sacred, there is no measure which I will not take to prevent it, failing in a reply to my just demand. So say—and so I will do. They will end by driving me mad, I wonder they have not already.

Of Venice I gave you some account in one of my letters. I have not much to add to it. I told you that I had fallen in love and that I shall probably remain here till the Spring, and that I am studying the Armenian language.

Marianina is not very well to-day, and I shall stay with her to nurse her this Evening. It is the Carnival, but the height of the Masquing is not yet begun. Catalani comes here on the 20th, but we have famous Music already, and a better opera than in London and a finer theatre, the Fenice by name, where I have a box, which costs me about *14* pounds sterling for the season instead

[1] Hanson, his solicitor.

of *four hundred* as in London, and a better box and a better opera, besides the music the Scenery is most superb. There is also a ballet inferior to the singing. The Society is like all foreign Society. There is also a Ridotto. My paper's out.

Ever yrs.
B

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Venice, February 25th 1817.

Dearest Augusta,

I believe you have received all my letters, for I sent you no description of Venice, beyond a slight sketch in a letter which I perceive has arrived, because you mention the "Canal &c." that was the longest letter I have written to you from this city of the seventy islands.

Instead of a description of the lady whom Aunt Sophy wants to have described, I will show you her picture, which is just finished for me, some of these days or other. The Carnival is over, but I am not in a descriptive mood, and will reserve all my wonders for word of mouth, when I see you again. I have nothing which would make you laugh much, except a battle some weeks ago in my apartment, between two of the fair "sect" (sisters in law) which ended in the flight of one and the fits of the other, and a great deal of confusion and eau de Cologne, and asterisks, and all that. The cause was —one paying me an evening visit. The other was gone out to a Conversazione, as was supposed for the evening, but lo and behold, in about half an hour she returned and entering my room, without a word, administered (before I could prevent her) about sixteen such slaps to her relation, as would have made your ear ache only to hear them. The assaulted lady screamed and ran away, the assailant attempted pursuit, but being prevented by me, fairly went into asterisks, which cost a world of water of all sorts, besides fine speeches to appease, and even then she declared herself a very ill used person,

although victorious over a much taller woman than herself. Besides she wronged my innocence, for nothing could be more innocent than my colloquy with the other. You may tell this to Sophy if she wants amusement. I repeat (as in my former letter) that I really and truly know nothing of P.P.[1]

I have published nothing but what you know already.

I am glad to hear of Ada's progress in her mother tongue, I hope you will see her again soon. What you "hope" may be, I do not know, if you mean a reunion between Lady B. and me, it is too late. It is now a year, and I have repeatedly offered to make it up, with what success you know. At present if she would rejoin me to-morrow, *I* would not accept the proposition. I have no spirit of hatred against her, however, I am too sensitive not to feel injuries, but far too proud to be vindictive. She's a fool, and when you have said that, it is the most that can be said for her.

ever very truly yrs.
B.

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Rome May 10th 1817.

My dearest Augusta

I have taken a flight down here (see the Map), but shall return to Venice in fifteen days from this date, so address all answers to my usual head- (or rather heart-) quarters—that is to Venice. I am very well, quite recovered, & as is always the case after all illness—particularly fever—got large, ruddy, & robustous to a degree which would please you—& shock me. I have been on horse-back several hours a day for this last ten days, besides now & then on my journey; proof positive of high health, & curiosity, & exercise. Love me—& don't be afraid—I mean of my sicknesses. I get well, & shall

[1] Lord Ernle explains this as referring to "Peter or Patrick Pattieson," the fictitious character under which Scott disguised the authorship of the first series of the "Tales of my Landlord." See "Letters and Journals," Vol. IV., p. 56.

always get so, & have luck enough still to beat most things ; & whether I win or not—depend upon it—I will fight to the last.

Will you tell my wife " mine excellent Wife " that she is brewing a Cataract for herself & me in these foolish equivocations about *Ada*,—a job for lawyers—& more hatred for every body, for which—(God knows), there is no occasion. She is surrounded by people who detest me —Brougham the lawyer—who never forgave me for saying that M^rs^ G^e^ Lambe was a damned fool (by the way I did not then know he was in love with her) in 1814, & for a former savage note in my foolish satire, all which is good reason for *him*—but not for *Lady B^n^* ; besides her mother—&^c^ &^c^ &^c^—so that what I may say or you may say is of no great use—however—*say it.* If she supposes that I want to hate or plague her (however wroth circumstances at times may make me in words & in temporary gusts or disgusts of feeling), she is quite out—I have no such wish—& never had, & if she imagines that I now wish to become united to her again she is still more out. *I never will.* I *would* to the end of the *year* succeeding our separation—(expired nearly a month ago, *Legal reckoning*), according to a resolution I had taken thereupon—but the day & the hour is gone by—and it is irrevocable. But all this is no reason for further misery & quarrel ; Give me but a *fair share* of my daughter—the half—my natural right & authority, & I am content ; otherwise I come to England, & " law & claw before they get it," all which will vex & out live Sir R. & L^y^ N.[1] besides making M^rs^ Clermont bilious— & plaguing Bell herself, which I really by the great God ! wish to avoid. Now pray see her & say so—it may do good—& if not—she & I are but what we are, & God knows that is wretched enough—at least to me.

Of Rome I say nothing—you can read the Guide-book —which is very accurate.

I found here an old letter of yours dated November 1816—to which the best answer I can make—is none.

[1] Noel.

You are sadly timid[1] my child, but so you all shewed yourselves when you could have been useful—particularly ———[2] but never mind. I shall not forget *him*, though I do not rejoice in any ill which befalls him. Is the fool's spawn a *son* or a *daughter?* you say one—& others another; so Sykes works him—*let him*—I shall live to see him & W.[3] destroyed, & more than them—& then—but let all that pass for the present.

yrs. ever

B

P.S. Hobhouse is here. I travelled from V—— *quite alone* so do not fuss about women &c—I am not so rash as I have been.

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Venice. June 3d 1817.

Dearest Augusta—I returned home a few days ago from Rome but wrote to you on the road; at Florence I believe, or Bologna. The last city you know—or do not know—is celebrated for the production of Popes—Cardinals—painters—& sausages—besides a female professor of anatomy, who has left there many models of the art in waxwork, some of them not the most decent. —I have received all your letters I believe, which are full of woes, as usual, megrims & mysteries; but my sympathies remain in suspense, for, for the life of me I can't make out whether your disorder is a broken heart or the earache—or whether it is *you* that have been ill or the children—or what your melancholy & mysterious apprehensions tend to, or refer to, whether to Caroline Lamb's novels—Mrs Clermont's evidence—Lady Byron's magnanimity—or any other piece of imposture; I know nothing of what you are in the doldrums about at present. I should think all that could affect *you* must have been over long ago; & as for me—leave me to take care of myself. I may be ill or well—in high or low spirits—in

[1] "Sadly timid" is substituted for "a sad coward," erased.
[2] George Byron.
[3] Wilmot.

quick or obtuse state of feelings—like any body else, but I can battle my way through; better than your exquisite piece of helplessness G. L.[1] or that other poor creature George Byron, who will be finely helped up in a year or two with his new state of life—I should like to know what they would do in my situation, or in any situation. I wish well to your George, who is the best of the two a devilish deal—but as for the other I shan't forget him in a hurry, & if I ever forgive or allow an opportunity to escape of evincing my sense of his conduct (& of more than his) on a certain occasion—write me down—what you will, but do not suppose me asleep. "Let them look to their bond"—sooner or later time & Nemesis will give me the ascendant—& then "let them look to their bond." I do not of course allude only to that poor wretch, but to all—to the 3^{d} & 4th generation of these accursed Amalekites & the woman who has been the stumbling block of my——

June 4th 1817.

I left off yesterday at the stumbling block of my Midianite marriage—but having received your letter of the 20th May I will be in good humour for the rest of this letter. I had hoped you would like the miniatures, at least one of them, which is in pretty good health; the other is thin enough to be sure—& so was I—& in the ebb of a fever when I sate for it. By the "man of fashion" I suppose you mean that poor piece of affectation and imitation Wilmot—another disgrace to me & mine—that fellow. I regret not having shot him, which the persuasions of others—& circumstances which at that time would have rendered combats presumptions against my cause—prevented. I wish you well of your indispositions which I hope are slight, or I should lose my senses.

Yours ever
very & truly

[1] Colonel George Leigh.

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Venice—June 19th 1817.

Dearest Augusta,—

Since the pictures are so bad—they need not be copied—the poor painter seems to have been ignorant of the art of flattery.—It is to be recollected that I was ill at the time—& had been so for months—that one of them was done in the climax of a slow fever—and that the other is an attempt to supply the health which I had not recovered.—Send me Holmes's print—one or two copies—they can come by the common post—not being heavy.—The last (the Venice) need not be copied.——

I fear that not any good can be done by your speaking to L^y^ Biron (*sic*)—but I think it my duty to give fair warning—because *they* have *broken* their *word*;—they are not aware that if I please I can dissolve the separation—which is not a legal act—nor further binding than the will of the parties;——I shall therefore not only take all proper and legal steps—but the former correspondence shall be published—& the whole business from the beginning investigated in all the courts of which it is susceptible;—unless the reasonable assurance which I have required with regard to my daughter be accorded —& now—come what may—as I have said—so will I do——& have already given the proper instructions to the proper persons—to prepare for the steps above mentioned.——

[A half sheet, partly written upon by Lord Byron, is here torn off, and the letter continues on another and smaller sheet as follows.]

Recollect only that I have done all in my power to avoid this extremity.——

I am not at Venice but a few miles on the mainland—on the road to Padua—address as usual to Venice. I ride daily.——

yrs. truly

B

P.S. I repeat to you again and again—that it would be much better at once to explain your mysteries—than to go on with this absurd obscure hinting mode of writing. What do you mean ? what is there known ? or can be known ? which *you* & *I* do not know much better ? & what concealment can you have from me ? I[1] never shrank—and it was on your account principally that I gave way at all—for I thought they would endeavour to drag you into it—although they had no business with anything previous to my[2] marriage with that infernal fiend, whose destruction I shall yet see. Do you suppose that I will rest while any of their branch is unwithered ? do you suppose that I will turn aside till they are trodden under foot ? do you suppose that I can breathe till they are uprooted ? Do you believe that time will alter them or me ? that I have suffered in vain—that I have been disgraced in vain—that I am reconciled to the sting of the scorpion—& the venom of the serpent ? which stung me in my slumber ?——If I did not believe —that Time & Nemesis—& circumstances would requite me for the delay—I would ere this have righted myself. —But " let them look to their bond "——

[This letter, as in all those where Byron expresses anger, is punctuated with long and vehement dashes of the pen.—Ed.]

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Venice Sep^tr 21^st 1818.—

Dearest Augusta—

I particularly beg that you will contrive to get the enclosed letter safely delivered to Lady Frances,[3] & if there is an answer to let me have it. You can write to her first & state that you have such a letter—at my request—for there is no occasion for any concealment at

[1] Underlined twice.
[2] Substituted for " the," erased.
[3] Wedderburne Webster.

least with *her*—& pray oblige me so far, for many reasons.

If the Queen dies you are no more a Maid of Honour—is it not so? Allegra[1] is well, but her mother (whom the Devil confound) came prancing the other day over the Appennines—to see her *shild;* which threw my Venetian loves (who are none of the quietest) into great combustion; and I was in a pucker till I got her to the Euganean hills, where she & the child now are, for the present. I declined seeing her for fear that the consequence might be an addition to the family; she is to have the child a month with her and then to return herself to Lucca, or Naples, where she was with her relatives (she is English you know), & to send Allegra to Venice again. I lent her my house at Este for her maternal holidays. As troubles don't come single, here is another confusion. The chaste wife of a baker—having quarrelled with her tyrannical husband—has run away *to* me (God knows without being invited), & resists all the tears & penitence and beg-pardons of her disconsolate Lord, and the threats of the police, and the priest of the parish besides; and swears she won't give up her unlawful love (myself), for any body, or any thing. I assure you I have begged her in all possible ways too to go back to her husband, promising her all kinds of eternal fidelity into the bargain, but she only flies into a fury; and as she is a very tall and formidable Girl of three and twenty, with the large black eyes and handsome face of a pretty fiend, a correspondent figure and a carriage as haughty as a Princess—with the violent passions & capacities for mischief of an Italian when they are roused—I am a little embarrassed with my unexpected acquisition. However she keeps my household in rare order, and has already frightened the learned Fletcher out of his remnants of wits more than once; we have turned her into a housekeeper. As the morals of this place are very lax, all the women commend her

[1] Alba or Clara Allegra Biron, his natural daughter by Jane Clairmont. See note, p. 280.

& say she has done right—especially her own relations. You need not be alarmed—I know how to manage her —and can deal with anything but a cold blooded animal such as Miss Milbanke. The worst is that she won't let a woman come into the house, unless she is as old and frightful as possible ; and has sent so many to the right about that my former female acquaintances are equally frightened & angry. She is extremely fond of the child, & is very cheerful & goodnatured, when not jealous ; but Othello himself was a fool to her in that respect. Her soubriquet in her family was *la Mora* from her colour, as she is very dark (though clear of complexion), which literally means *the Moor* so that I have " the Moor of Venice " in propria persona as part of my household. She has been here this month. I had known her (and fifty others) more than a year, but did not anticipate this escapade, which was the fault of her booby husband's treatment—who now runs about repenting & roaring like a bull calf. I told him to take her in the devil's name, but she would not stir ; & made him a long speech in the Venetian dialect which was more entertaining to anybody than to him to whom it was addressed. You see Goose—that there is no quiet in this world—so be a good woman—& repent of y^r^ sins.——

[The next letter preserved is the important one of May 17, 1819, printed in full, with the correspondence between Mrs. Leigh and Lady Byron concerning it, in Chapter IV., pp. 81 to 99.]

WRITTEN IN THE WRAPPER OF A LETTER FROM LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

[Ravenna July 1819]

Allegra is well at Venice——There are also a fox, some dogs and two monkies, all scratching, screaming and fighting—in the highest health and Spirits. Fletcher is

flourishing. Lady B. has refused a *character* to his wife, a little revenge of a-piece with *her own*. You say nothing of Ada, how is she ? doubtless Lady Noel is as immortal as ever. Her death would do too much good for Providence to permit it in this state of sublunary things. If you see my Spouse—do pray tell her I wish to marry again and as probably she may wish the same, is there no way in *Scotland ?* without compromising *her* immaculacy—cannot it be done there by the husband solely ?

Lord Byron to Lady Byron.

(Enclosing verses of a German poet.)

Ravenna. July 20th 1819.

I have received from Holstein (I believe) the annexed paper of the Baroness of Hohenhausen &c. and the inclosed letter of a Mr. Jacob (or Jacobssen) and as they "ardently wish it could reach you" I transmit it. You will smile, as I have done, at the importance which they attach to such things, and the effect which they conceive capable of being produced by composition, but the Germans are still a young and a romantic people, and live in an ideal world. Perhaps it may not offend you, however it may surprise, that the good people on the frontiers of Denmark have taken an interest in your domestic Affairs, which have now, I think, nearly made the tour of Europe, and been discussed in most of its languages, to as little purpose as in our own. If you like to retain the enclosed, you can do so, an indication to my Sister that you have received the letter will be a sufficient answer. I will not close this sheet without a few words more. Fletcher has complained to me of your declining to give his wife a character, on account of your "doubts of her veracity in some circumstances a short time before she left you." If your doubts allude to her testimony on your case during the then discussion, you *must* or at least ought to be the best judge how far she spoke truth or not ; *I* can only say that She never had directly or indirectly, through me or mine, the

slightest inducement to the contrary, nor am I indeed perfectly aware of what her Evidence was, never having seen her nor communicated with her at that period or since. I presume that you will weigh well your justice before you deprive the woman of the means of obtaining her bread. No one can be more fully aware than I am of the utter inefficacy of any words of mine to you on this or on any other subject, but I have discharged my duty to Truth in stating the above, and now do yours.

The date of my letter, indeed my letter itself, may surprize you, but I left Venice in the beginning of June, and came down into Romagna; there is the famous forest of Boccacio's Story and Dryden's fable hardby, the Adriatic not far distant, and the Sepulchre of Dante within the walls. I am just going to take a Canter (for I have resumed my Tartar habits since I left England) in the cool of the Evening, and in the shadow of the forest till the Ave Maria. I have got both my saddle and Carriage horses with me, and don't spare them, in the cooler part of the day. But I shall probably return to Venice in a short time. Ravenna itself preserves perhaps more of the old Italian manners than any City in Italy. It is out of the way of travellers and armies, and thus they have retained more of their originality. They make love a good deal, and assassinate a little. The department is governed by a Cardinal Legate (Alberoni was once legate here) to whom I have been presented and who told me some singular anecdotes of past times—of Alfieri &c. and others. I tried to discover for Leigh Hunt some traces of Francesca, but except her father Guido's tomb, and the mere notice of the fact in the Latin commentary of Benvenuto da Imola in M.S. in the library, I could discover nothing for him. He (Hunt) has made a sad mistake about "old Ravenna's *clear-shewn towers* and *bay*" the city lies so low that you must be close upon it before it is "shewn" at all, and the Sea had retired *four miles* at least, long before Francesca was born, and as far back as the Exarchs and Emperors. They tell me that at Rimini they know as

LORD BYRON IN ALBANIAN DRESS

A posthumous Portrait by T. Phillips, R.A., who had previously painted the well-known similar portrait from life. At Ockham.

little about her now—as they do here—so I have not gone there, it lies in the way to Rome, but I was at Rome in 1817. This is odd, for at Venice I found many traditions of the old Venetians, and at Ferrara a plentiful assortment of the House of Este, with the remains of the very Mirror, whose reflection cost at least a dozen lives, including those of Parisina and Ugo. I was wrong in placing those two naughty people in a garden. Parisina was a Malatesta of Rimini, and her daughter by Niccolo of Este was also put to death by some Italian Chief her husband in nearly the same manner as her mother. Her name was Ginevra. So that including the alliance of Francesca with Launcelot Malatesta of Rimini, that same Malatesta family appears to have been but indifferently fortunate in their matrimonial speculations——I have written to you thus much, because in writing to you at all I may as well write much as little. I have not heard of Ada for many months but they say " no news is good news " she must now be three years and almost eight months old. You must let her be taught Italian as soon as she can be taught any language but her own, and pray let her be musical, that is if She has a turn that way. I presume that Italian being a language of mine, will not prevent you from recollecting my request at the proper time.

I am
&c.
B

Bologna. August 31st.
1819.

This letter was written as far back as July 20th at Ravenna, but I delayed putting it in the post till my return here which will account for the interval between the date and the arrival of the letter, *if* it arrives. Pray state to Augusta that you have received it, on account of the inclosures. I want no other answer. I should like to have a picture of Miss Byron, when she can conveniently sit to Holmes or any other painter. Addio.

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Second sheet of a letter (the first sheet of which is destroyed—towards Sept. 10 1819.)

. . . . .

Pray tell Waite to take a post-chaise ; for if our Dentist follows our Barber, there will be ne'er a tooth or hair left which people can depend upon for a half year's engagement.

I am truly sorry for Blake, but as you observe with great truth and novelty " we are none of us immortal." It were to be wished however that Coachmen did not help people over the Styx—*that* used to be watermen's work and fare.—

You say nothing in favour of my return to England. —Very well—I will stay where I am—and you will never see me more.

[A portion of the paper on which the next passage is written is here cut out by Mrs. Leigh.—Ed.]

Yrs ever
B

P.S.

I sent Lady Byron the other day a letter—enclosing some letters from Germany to me concerning her chiefly, and which the writers wished her to have. Ask her by letter if she has received that letter. I want no answer but a mere acknowledgment to *you* or to M^r^ Murray of the arrival of my letter.

I want also a picture of Ada—and my miniature (by Holmes) of *you*. Address to Venice as usual. Allegra is here with me, in good health & very amiable & pretty, at least thought so. She is English, but speaks nothing but Venetian. " Bon di, papa " &^c^ &^c^ she is very droll, and has a good deal of the Byron—can't articulate the letter *r* at all—frowns and pouts quite in our way—blue eyes—light hair growing *darker* daily—and a dimple in her chin—a scowl on the brow—white skin—sweet voice

—and a particular liking of Music—and of her own way in every thing—is not that B. all over ?

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Venice. Nov^r 28^th 1819.

My dearest Augusta,—

Yours of the 11th came to-day—many thanks. I may be wrong, and right or wrong, have lived long enough not to defend opinions ; but my doubts of the funds were Douglas Kinnaird's, who also told me that at the investment Lady B. or her agents had demurred. I know nothing of England but through Douglas and Hobhouse, who are alarming reformers, and the Paris papers which are full of bank perplexities. The Stake concerns you and your children who are in part my heirs, and Lady B—— and her child who have a jointure and all that to come out of it. She may do as she pleases—I merely suggest—it is all your affair as much as mine. Since I wrote to you last I have had with all my household & family a sharp tertian fever. I have got *well* but Allegra is still laid up though convalescent ; and her nurse—and half my ragamuffins—Gondoliers, Nurses—cook—footmen &^c I cured myself without bark, but all the others are taking it like trees. I have also had another hot crater, in the shape of a scene with Count Guiccioli who quarrelled with his wife, who refused to go back to him, and wanted to stay with me—and elope—and be as good as married. At last they made it up—but there was a dreadful scene ; if I had not loved her better than myself, I could not have resisted her wish but at thirty one years, as I have, and *such years* as they have been—you may be sure—knowing the world that I would rather sacrifice myself ten times over—than the girl, who did not know the extent of the step she was so eager to take. He behaved well enough, saying "take your lover or retain me—but you shan't have both," the lady would have taken her lover as in duty bound—not to do—but on representing to her the

destruction it would bring on her family (five unmarried sisters) and all the probable consequences—she had the reluctant good grace to acquiesce and return with him to Ravenna. But this business has rendered Italy hateful to me, and as I left England on account of my own wife, I leave Italy because of another's. You need not be frightened—there was no fighting—nobody fights here—they sometimes assassinate, but generally by proxy —and as to intrigue, it is the only employment; but elopements and separations are still more serious than even with us being so uncommon, and indeed needless; as excepting an occasionally jealous old gentleman—every body lets their spouses have a man or two—provided he be taken with decency. But the Guiccioli was romantic and had read "Corinna"—in short she was a kind of Italian Caroline Lamb—but very pretty and gentle, at least to me; for I never knew so docile a creature as far as we lived together, except that she had a great desire to leave her husband who is sixty years old—and not pleasant. There was the deuce—for her father's family (a very noble one of Ravenna), were furious against the *husband*—(not against me) for his unreasonable ways. You must not dislike *her*, for she was a great admirer of *you*, and used to collect and seal up all *your letters* to me as they came that they might not be lost or mixed with other papers; and she was a very amiable and accomplished woman, with however some of the drawbacks of the Italian character now corrupted for ages.

All this—and my fever—have made me low and ill; but the moment Allegra is better we shall set off over the Tyrolese Alps, and find our way to England as we can, to the great solace of Mr Fletcher, who may perhaps find his family not less increased than his fortune during his absence. I cannot fix any day for departure or arrival—so much depending on circumstances—but we are to be in voyage as soon as it can be undertaken with safety to the child's health. As to the Countess G. if I had been single and could have married her by getting

her divorced, she would probably have been of the party; but this being out of the question—though *she* was as "all for love or the world well lost"—I, who know what "love" and "the world" both are, persuaded her to keep her station in society.

Pray let Ada's picture be *portable* as I am likely to see more of the portrait than of the original. Excuse this scrawl. Think that within this month I have had a *fever—an Italian husband and wife quarrelling;*—a sick family—and *the preparation for a December journey over the mountains of the Tyrol all brewing at once in my cauldron.*

yours

[The signature is as in letter of Sept. 21st, 1818.—Ed.]

P.S. I enclose *her* last letter to me by which you may judge for yourself—that it was a serious business—I have felt it such, but—it was my duty to do as I did as her husband offered to forgive everything if she would return with him to Ravenna and give up her liaison.——

I will talk to you of my American scheme when I see you—

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Venice, Dec^{r} 4th 1819

My dearest Augusta—

The enclosed letter is from Douglas Kinnaird. You can send it to Ly B—— & hear what she says. If they—that is the trustees—approve, I can have no objection. I wish you too to express *your own* opinion—as, in case of my not marrying again & having a son—you & yours must eventually be my heirs according to my Will, made 5 years ago, since the marriage.

You need not answer to this place, as I expect to be in or near England by the new year. We propose setting out in a few days.

I wrote to you a long letter about ten days ago

explaining why &c &c I think of leaving Italy so soon. If you address a line to Calais it will I trust be met by yrs ever

most affct

B

[In a letter dated Dec. 23rd, printed in "Letters and Journals," Byron explained that he had postponed this journey.—Ed.]

Lord Byron to Lady Byron.

Ravenna. Decr. 31st 1819.

Anything—like or unlike—copy or original will be welcome, I can make no comparison, and find no fault, it is enough for me to have something to remind me of what is yours and mine, and which, whatever may be mine, will I hope be yours while you breathe. It is my wish to give you as little further trouble as can be helped, the time and the mode of sending the picture you can choose; I have been taught waiting if not patience. The wretchedness of the past should be sufficient for you and me without adding wittingly to the future more bitterness than that of which time and eternity are pregnant. While we do not approximate we may be gentle, and feel at a distance what we once felt without mutual or self-reproach. This time five years (the fault is not mine but of Augusta's letter 10th Decr. which arrived to-day) I was on my way to our funeral marriage. I hardly thought then that your bridegroom as an exile would one day address you as a stranger; and that Lady and Lord Byron would become byewords of division. This time four years I suspected it as little. I speak to you from another country, and as it were from another world, for this city of Italy is out of the track of armies and travellers, and is more of the old time. That I think of you is but too obvious, for three hours have not passed, since in society where I ought not to think of you, though Italian customs and Italian, perhaps even English, passions attach more importance and duty to

such liaisons than to any nuptial engagement, the principal person concerned said to me—" tu pensi di tua moglie "—it was so right a conjecture that I started and answered why do you think so ? The answer was—" because you are so serious—and she is the woman whom I believe tu ami piu ed ami sempre "—If this had been said in a moment of anger or of playfulness, I should have thought it the consequence of ill humour or curiosity, but it was said without any such prologue, in a time of indifferent things and much good company, Countesses and Marchionesses and all the noble blood of the descendants of Guido di Polenta's—cotemporaries with names eloquent of the middle ages.

I was nearly on the point of setting out for England in November, but a fever the *epidemic* of the Season stopped me with other reasons ; Augusta can tell you all about me and mine if you think either worth the enquiry. But the object of my writing is to come.

It is this—I saw Moore three months ago and gave to his care a long Memoir written up to the Summer of 1816, of my life which I had been writing since I left England. It will not be published till after my death, and in fact it is a " Memoir " and not " confessions." I have omitted the most important and decisive events and passions of my existence not to compromise others. But it is not so with the part you occupy, which is long and minute, and I could wish you to see, read and mark any part or parts that do not appear to coincide with the truth. The truth I have always stated—but there are two ways of looking at it—and your way may not be mine. I have never revised the papers since they were written. You may read them and mark what you please. I wish you (to) know what I think and say of you and yours. You will find nothing to flatter you, nothing to lead you to the most remote supposition that we could ever have been, or be happy together. But I do not choose to give to another generation statements which we cannot arise from the dust to prove or disprove —without letting you see fairly and fully what I look

upon you to have been, and what I depict you as being. If seeing this, you can detect what is false, or answer what is charged, do so—*your mark* shall not be erased.

You will perhaps say *why* write my life? Alas!—I say so too, but they who have traduced it and blasted it, and branded me, should know—that it is they, and not I—are the cause. It is no great pleasure to have lived, and less to live over again the details of existence, but the last becomes sometimes a necessity and even a duty.

If you choose to see this you may, if you do not—you have at least had the option.

B

January 1st.

[Part of the above letter is printed in Chap. V., pp. 101–2.—Ed.]

Lord Byron to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Ravenna. August 19th 1820.

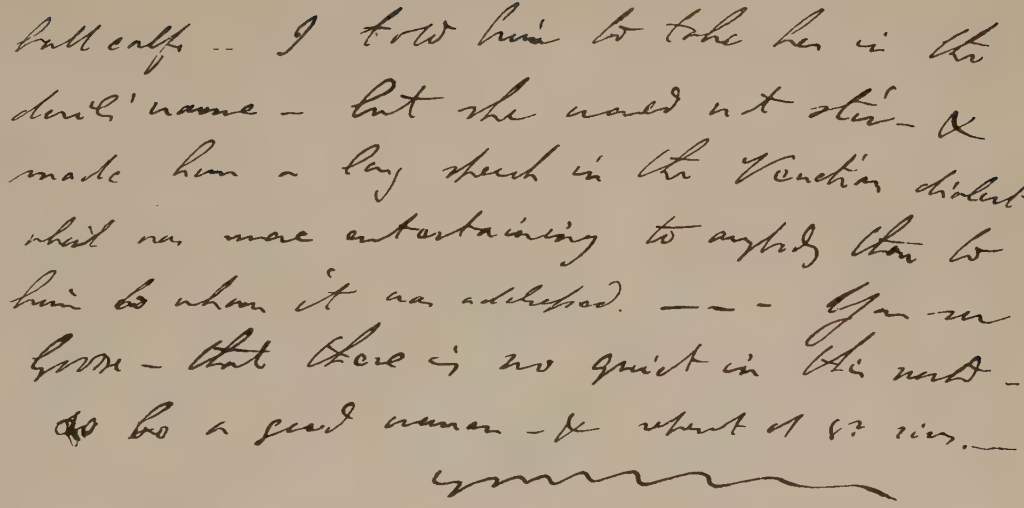
My dearest Augusta—

I always loved you better than any earthly existence, and I always shall unless I go mad. And if I did *not* so love you—still I would not persecute or oppress any one wittingly—especially for debts, of which I know the *agony by experience.* Of Colonel Leigh's bond, I really have forgotten all particulars, except that it was *not* of *my wishing.* And I never would nor ever will be *pressed* into the *Gang of his creditors.* I would *not take the money* if he had it. You may judge if I would dun him having it not —— ——

Whatever measure I can take for his extrication will be taken. Only tell me how—for I am ignorant, and far away. *Who does* and *who can* accuse *you* of "interested views"? I think people must have gone into Bedlam such things appear to me so very incomprehensible. Pray explain——

yors ever
& truly

Byron



FACSIMILE OF CLOSING LINES OF BYRON'S LETTER OF SEPT. 21ST, 1818 (WITHOUT SIGNATURE), TO MRS. LEIGH.

FRAGMENT OF A LETTER FROM LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH, apparently 1820, from a half-burnt sheet. The remainder is missing.

. . . . .

Hobhouse cares about as much for the Queen as he does for S^t^. Paul's. One ought to be glad however of anything which makes either of them go to Church. I am also delighted to see *you* grown so *moral*. It is edifying.

Pray write, and believe me ever dearest A,

Yours

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Ravenna. 9^bre^ 18^th^ 1820

My dearest Augusta—

You will I hope have received a discreetly long letter from me—not long ago,—Murray has just written that *Waite*—is dead—poor fellow—he and Blake—both deceased—what *is* to become of our hair & teeth.—The hair is less to be minded—any body can cut hair—though not so well—but the *mouth* is a still more serious concern.——

Has he no Successor ?—pray tell me the next best—for what am I to do for brushes & powder ?——And then the *Children*—only think—what will become of their jaws ? Such men ought to be immortal—& not your stupid heroes—orators & poets.——

I am really so sorry—that I can't think of anything else just now.—Besides I liked him with all his Coxcombry.——

Let me know what we are all to do,—& to whom we can have recourse without damage for our cleaning—scaling & powder.—

How do you get on with your affairs ?—and how does every body get on.——

How is all your rabbit-warren of a family ? I gave you an account of mine by last letter.—The Child Allegra is well—but the Monkey has got a cough—and the tame

Crow has lately suffered from the head ache.——Fletcher has been bled for a Stitch—& looks flourishing again——

Pray write—excuse this short scrawl—

yours ever

B

P.S.

Recollect about Waite's Successor—why he was only *married* the other day—& now I don't wonder so much that the poor man died of it.——

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Ravenna. 10bre 21st 1820.

Dearest Augusta,

Inform Lady B. that I am obliged by her readiness to have Ada taught Music and Italian, according to my wish (when she arrives at the proper period) and that in return I will give her as little trouble as can be avoided upon the subject of her education, tutelage, and guardianship. A Girl is in all cases better with the mother, unless there is some moral objection, and I shall not allow my own private feelings to interfere with what is for the advantage of the Child. She may bring her up in her own way; I am so sensible that a *man* ought to have nothing to do with such matters, that I shall in another year, either put Allegra (my natural daughter) into a Convent, or send or bring her to England, to put her in some good way of instruction. Tell Lady B. that I have written to her *two* letters within these *three* or *four months*. I do not say this because I desire an answer, for I have no such expectation, but simply that She may know that they have been sent, as the Italian post in these times is always treacherous and sometimes tyrannical enough to suppress letters. Will you for the same reason inform Murray that for six weeks I have had no letters, although for fifty reasons he ought to have written. Either the Post plays false or he is a shabby fellow.

The State of things here is what cannot be described. Not ten days ago the Commandant of the troops was

assasinated at my door, and died as he was being carried into my apartments ; he lay on Fletcher's bed a corpse for eighteen hours, before the Government ventured to remove him. He was shot in walking home to his barrack at 8 in the Evening. All this is little to what will be—if there is a Neapolitan war. The Italians are right however, they want liberty, and if it is not given, they must take it. What you say of the Queen is of no consequence, it is the state of things which is shewn that imports. I have written and written to Lady B. to get us *out* of the *funds*—will she wait till they *go?* I know more of *those* things than you or she do, both at home and abroad ; and those who live will see strange things.

[Torn off here.]

LORD BYRON TO LADY BYRON.

R^a. January 11th 1821.

I have just heard from Mr. Kinnaird that (through the jugglery of Hanson) Mr. Bland (with the advice of Counsel) has refused to consent to the Irish loan on mortgage, to Lord Blessington. As you of course did not do this intentionally, I shall not upbraid you or yours, though the connection has proved so unfortunate a one for us all, to the ruin of my fame, of my peace, and the hampering of my fortune. I suppose that the trustees will not object to an English Security—if it can be found—though the terms may necessarily be less advantageous. I had, God knows, unpleasant things enough to contend with just now, without this addition. I presume that you were aware that the Rochdale Cause also was lost last Summer. However it is appealed upon, but with no great hopes on my part. The State of things *here*, you will have seen, if you have received my two letters of last month. But the grand consolation is that all things must end, whether they mend or no.

yrs. ever

B

P.S. I wrote to thank you for your consent about the futurities of Augusta's family.——

I had set my heart upon getting out of those infernal funds, which are all false, and thought that the difficulties were at length over. Yours has been a bitter connection to me in every sense, it would have been better for me never to have been born than to have ever seen you. This sounds harsh, but is it not true ? and recollect that I do not mean that you were my *intentional* evil Genius but an Instrument for my destruction—and you yourself have suffered too (poor thing) in the agency, as the lightning perishes in the instant with the Oak which it strikes.

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Ravenna. June 22d. 1821.

My dearest A.—

What was I to write about ? I live in a different world. You knew from others that I was in tolerable plight, and all that. However write I will since you desire it. I have put my daughter in a convent for the present to begin her accomplishments by reading, to which she had a learned aversion, but the arrangement is merely temporary till I can settle some plan for her ; if I return to England, it is likely that she will accompany me—if not—I sometimes think of Switzerland, and sometimes of the Italian Conventual education ; I shall hear both sides (for I have Swiss Friends—through Mr. Hoppner the Consul General, he is connected by marriage with that country) and choose what seems most rational. My menagerie—(which you enquire after) has had some vacancies by the elopement of one cat, the decease of two monkies and a crow, by indigestion—but it is still a flourishing and somewhat obstreperous establishment.

You may suppose that I was sufficiently provoked by Elliston's behaviour, the more so as the foreign Journals, the Austrian ones at least (who detest me for my politics) had misrepresented the whole thing. The moment I knew the real facts from England, I made these Italical

Gentry contradict themselves and tell the truth—the former they are used to—the latter was a sad trial to them, but they did it, however, by dint of Mr. Hoppner's and my own remonstrances.

Tell Murray that I enclosed him a month ago (on the 2d.) another play, which I presume that he has received (as I ensured it at the post Office) *you* must help him to decypher it, for I sent the only copy, and you can better make out my *griffonnage;* tell him it *must* be printed (aye and published too) immediately, and copied out, for I do not choose to have only that *one* copy.

Will you for the hundredth time apply to Lady B. about the *funds*, they are now *high*, and I could sell out to a great advantage. Don't forget this, that cursed connection crosses at every turn my fortunes, my feelings and my fame. I had no wish to nourish my detestation of her and her family, but they pursue, like an Evil Genius. I send you an Elegy upon Lady Noel's *recovery* —(made too [here about fourteen lines of the autograph are cut off]
the parish register—I will reserve my tears for the demise of Lady Noel, but the old —— will live forever because she is so amiable and useful.

Yours ever & [illegible.—Ed.]

B

P.S.

Let me know about Holmes.[1] Oh La !—is he as great a mountebank as ever ?

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Ra—Sep.^{tr} 13th
(1821)

My dearest A./—

From out the enclosed as well as the former parcel (a few posts ago), select some of the *best-behaved* curls, and set them in a golden locket for Ada my daughter. Round the locket let there be this Italian inscription

[1] The miniature painter.

"Il Sangue non è mai Acqua." And do not let the engravers blunder. It means "Blood is never water," and alludes merely to relationship, being a common proverb. I should wish her to wear this—that she may know she has (or had) a father in the world. Let the bill for the locket be sent to Mr. Kinnaird, and let him deduct it from my accounts.

Do this and prosper!

yrs ever
B

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Oct.r 5th 1821.—

My dearest Augusta/

Has there been nothing to make it grey? to be sure the *years* have not. Your *parcel* will not find me here—I am going to *Pisa*, for the winter. The late political troubles here have occasioned the exile of all my friends & connections, & I am going there to join them. You know or you do not know that Madame La Comtesse G. was separated from her husband last year (on account of P.P. Clerk of this parish [1]), that the Pope decided in her favor & gave her a separate maintenance & that we lived very quietly & decently—she at her father's (as the Pope decided) and I at home—till this Summer. When her father was exiled, she was obliged either to accompany him or retire into a Convent—such being the terms of His Holiness's deed of divorcement. They went to Pisa by my recommendation & there I go to join them.

So there's a *romance* for you. I assure you it was not my wish nor fault altogether. Her husband was old—rich—& must have left her a large jointure in a few years; but he was jealous, & insisted &.c, & *she* like all the rest *would* have her own way. You know that all my loves go crazy, and make scenes—and so—"She is the sixteenth Mrs. Shuffleton." Being very young—very

[1] See note, p. 283.

romantic—and odd—and being contradicted by her husband besides, & being of a country where morals are no better than in England, (though elopements and divorces are rare—and *this* made an uncommon noise—the first that had occurred at Ravenna for two hundred years—that is in a *public* way with appeals to the Pope &c) you are not to wonder much at it; she being too a beauty & the great Belle of the four Legations, and married not quite a year (at our first acquaintance) to a man *forty* years older than herself who had had two wives already & a little suspected of having poisoned his first.

We have been living hitherto decently & quietly. These things here do not exclude a woman from all society as in yr hypocritical country. It is very odd that all my *fairs* are such romantic people; and always daggering or divorcing—or making scenes.

But this is "positively the last time of performance" (as the playbills say), or of my getting into such scrapes for the future. Indeed—I have had my share. But this is a finisher; for you know when a woman is separated from her husband for her *Amant*, he is bound both by honour (and inclination at least I am), to live with her all his days; as long as there is no misconduct.

So you see that I have closed as papa *begun*, and *you* will probably never see me again as long as you live. Indeed you don't deserve it—for having behaved so *coldly—when I was ready to have sacrificed every thing for you—and after* [*you had* / *having*] *taken the farther always* [1]

It is nearly three years that this "liaison" has lasted. I was dreadfully in love—and she blindly so—for she has sacrificed every thing to this headlong passion. That comes of being romantic. I can say that, without being so *furiously* in love as at first, I am more attached to her than I thought it possible to be to any woman

[1] The words in italics are erased (apparently not by the writer) and partly illegible. "You" is underlined.

after three years—(*except one & who was she can* YOU *guess?*) [1]
and have not the least wish nor prospect of separation from her. She herself, (and it is now a year since her separation, a year too of all kinds of vicissitudes &c) is still more decided. Of course the *step* was a decisive one. If Lady B. would but please to die, and the Countess G.'s husband (for Catholics can't marry though divorced), we should probably have to marry—though I would rather *not*—thinking it the way to hate each other—for all people whatsoever.

However you need not calculate upon seeing me again in a hurry, if ever. How have you sent the *parcel*, and how am I to receive it at Pisa? I am anxious about the Seal—not about Hodgson's nonsense. What is the fool afraid of the *post* for? it is the *safest*—the only *safe* conveyance. They never meddle but with political packets.

Yours

P.S. *You* ought to be a great admirer of the *future* Lady B. for *three* reasons, 1^{stly} She is a grand patroness of the present Lady B. and always says "that she has no doubt that" she was exceedingly ill-used by me—2^{dly} She is an admirer of yours; and I have had great difficulty in keeping her from writing to you eleven pages, (for she is a grand Scribe), and 3^{dly} she having read "Don Juan" in a *French* translation—made me promise to write *no more* of it, declaring that it was abominable &c &c that *Donna Inez* WAS[2] meant for Lady B. & in short made me vow *not* to continue it—(this occurred lately)& since the last cantos were sent to England last year). Is this not altogether odd enough? She has a good deal of *us* too. I mean that turn for ridicule like Aunt Sophy and you and I & all the B's Desire Georgiana to write me a letter I suppose she can by this time.

[1] Erased (apparently not by the writer) and hardly legible.
[2] Underlined twice.

Opened by me—and the Seal taken off—so—don't accuse the post-office without cause

B—that's a sign—a written one where the wax was.

LORD BYRON TO THE HON. MRS. LEIGH.

Pisa. March 4th 1822.

My dearest Augusta,

I write two words to acknowledge your letter. I certainly felt a good deal surprized that *you* did not write immediately to announce that event,[1] but it was probably for some good *nursery reason*, that you did not. I regret the pain which the privation must occasion to Sir R. N. and to L^y^ B., but I shall not pretend to any violent grief for one with whom my acquaintance was neither long nor agreeable. Still I bear her memory no malice. I am a little disappointed that Georgy should not write, it is proper that my nephews and nieces should cultivate some acquaintance with me, otherwise the interest I feel for them may diminish unavoidably from total estrangement. It has ever been my object (if I live long enough) to provide as far as I can for your children, as my daughter by Ly. B is rich enough already, and my natural daughter also will have a decent provision. I shall try what I can to save or accumulate some funds for this purpose (if Fortune be favourable) and should therefore like to hear now and then from my "residee lega*toos*" as I am not likely to *see* much of them for the present. If it should seem odd that I do nor prefer my *own* family, I think there are some reasons which will suggest themselves to you however, as it is quite impossible that any thing which reminds me of that unhappy connection with L^y^ B's family can excite the same *unmixed* feeling which exists where there are no divisions.

yrs ever & truly
NOEL BYRON[2]

[1] Death of Lady Noel.

[2] Byron was now legally bound to assume the name of Noel, his wife having inherited the Noel estates from her mother.

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Genoa. Octr. 12th 1822.

My dearest Augusta,

My date will inform you that I am an hundred miles or better nearer to you than I was. Address to Genoa where we all are for the present—i.e. The family of Count Gamba, who left Ravenna in 1821 with me on account of the political troubles, together with myself &c. &c. &c.

Lady B. has done a very acceptable thing to me—and I presume to you—in sending you the game, it is the first thing of the kind too for these seven years, for what with trustees, lawyers, bankers, and arbitrators, both sides have hitherto proceeded as they did in the feudal times, when people used to shake hands with iron gauntlets on through a hole in the door, after being searched for concealed arms, by way of ascertaining the sincerity of their politeness. You cannot conceive how much things harass me, and provoke me into expressions which I momentarily feel; it appears to me that persons who are in our peculiar situation, and can never see each other as long as they live again, should at least be courteous in their distance, *because* they never can come in contact. She has lately had a chance of having the estate to herself, for I was for four days confined to my bed, in "the worst inn's worst room" at Lerici, on my way here, with a very painful attack of bile and rheumatism and I know not what besides—no physician but a young Italian in no great practice—however I got over it, and on my journey further got well again. The English Physician here says I am bilious, and must take the "blue pill" &c. I have no objection to take all the colours of the rainbow if they can make them into a prescription.

I saw Mr. Hobhouse at Pisa before I left it, he is gone to Rome I believe. He told me that the Rev^{d} Thomas Noel (who married us) had requested him to ask me for the promise (in case of the incumbent's demise) of some

living or other at Kirkby Mallory. I wish you would ask Lady B. about it, for in the first place I know nothing of any living, and in the next place, to *this hour* I do not know whether the estate is in *her*, or in *me*, or in the *trustees*, or whether the living is in her gift, or mine, or anybody's or nobody's. I greatly fear by what I hear on those subjects that we shall have all to go into *Chancery* which—Heaven knows—is but a prospect of no pleasing augurey. About the living you may tell her that *I* (if I have a voice in the matter) can have no views or preferences, that as T. Noel is the son of Ld. W. and, poor fellow, in the awkward situation of seeing what should have been his own in the possession of others, had his father observed the rights of the Church, it is but fair that the Church should give him some portions of what should have been his rights. If therefore he can obtain Lady B's promise, I will not withhold mine, but in any case (supposing that the whole right was vested in me) I should not put myself in opposition to her, if she had any other views upon the subject. But I know little or nothing of the matter.

Address to Genoa—yrs ever & truly

N. B.

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Genoa. J^{y} 27th 1823.

My dearest Augusta—Your informant was as usual in error. Do not believe all the lies you may hear. Hobhouse can tell you that I have *not* lost *any* of my *teeth hitherto*, since I was 12 years old, and had a back one taken out by Dumergue to make room for others growing, and so far from being fatter—at *present* I am much thinner than when I left England, when I was not very stout—the *latter* you will regret the *former* you will be glad to hear. Hobhouse can tell you all particulars, though I am much reduced since he saw me, and more than *you* would like. I write to you these few lines in haste, perhaps we may meet in Spring, either *here*, or in

England. Hobhouse says your coming out would be the best thing which you could do, for yourself and me too—ever yrs most affectly

N. B.

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

(Genoa) June 23d 1823.

My dearest Augusta,

Tell Lady B. that she did quite right—and I am glad that she did so without hesitation. I do not know where the *law lies* (it *lies* always I believe) but I never would have promised the living to any one without her approbation, but have rather left the nomination to herself.

I sail for Greece in about a fortnight, address to Genoa —as usual—letters will be forwarded. yrs ever

N. B.

[At the foot are the following words in Mrs. Leigh's writing, addressed to Lady Byron :]

Just recd my dearest A only time to send & beg you to return it.

Lord Byron to The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

October 8, 1823.

I wish you could obtain from Lady B—— some account of Ada's disposition, habits, studies, moral tendencies, and temper, as well as of her personal appearance, for except from the miniature drawn five years ago (and she is now double that age nearly) I have no idea of even her aspect. When I am advised on these points, I can form some notion of her character, and what way her dispositions or indispositions ought to be treated, and though I will never interfere with or thwart her mother, yet I may perhaps be permitted to suggest, as she (Lady B.) is not obliged to follow my notions unless she likes—which is not very likely. Is the girl imaginative ? At *her* present age I have an idea that I had many

feelings and notions which people would not believe if I stated them *now*, and therefore I may as well keep them to myself. Is she social or solitary, taciturn or talkative, fond of reading or otherwise, and what is her *tic* ?—I mean her foible—is she passionate ? I hope that the Gods have made her any thing save *poetical*—it is enough to have one such fool in a family.

NOTES BY THE EDITOR

NOTE I

MR. EDGCUMBE'S THEORY

THE necessity has been pointed out to me of dealing with Mr. R. Edgcumbe's book, "Byron, the Last Phase," published in 1909.

Mr. Edgcumbe's thesis is to the effect that Byron and his early love, Mary Chaworth (Mrs. Chaworth Musters), met again in the summer of 1813, and that the child, Elizabeth Medora Leigh, born in April, 1814, was the result of their intercourse. He supposes that Mrs. Leigh pretended to be the mother of this child in order to shield another woman, whom, as he himself acknowledges, she had not known more than three months. (There is, in fact, so far as I can ascertain, no evidence that she ever did know her.) He does not attempt to explain how a married woman, living surrounded by family and friends and servants, contrived to go through a bogus confinement and introduce a make-believe child into her house without detection. He goes on to assume that after this Mrs. Leigh corresponded with Lady Byron for years, sending letters to her to read which she pretended had been addressed by Byron to herself, when in fact they had been sent to her for transmission to Mrs. Chaworth —that in doing so she avowed that she had been guilty of incest, and acknowledged Byron's fatherhood of her child, Elizabeth Medora. And all this for the sake of a comparative stranger, whose guilt, if she had been guilty, would have been as nothing compared to that assumed by Mrs. Leigh.

There was a very able article by the late Andrew Lang in the *Fortnightly Review* of August, 1910, on "Byron and Mary Chaworth," in which, from publicly printed sources only, he completely exposed the absurdities of Mr. Edgcumbe's inventions. He writes :—

"Byron's *liaison* with Mrs. Chaworth Musters, says Mr. Edgcumbe, was of June–July, 1813. The lady was then living at Annesley, near Byron's place, Newstead Abbey. We therefore expect evidence from Mr. Edgcumbe proving that Byron did reside at Newstead Abbey on occasion, in June–July, 1813.

Not only does he produce no such evidence, but his own statement, slipshod enough, proves, if it proves anything, that Byron never was at Newstead or near it in June, 1813; nor is any proof afforded that he was there in July."

. . . . .

"Far from proving that Byron got into a new and very serious scrape in June, near Newstead, Mr. Edgcumbe's evidence—Byron's letters—proves that the scrape dates from the end of July, when Byron was quite certainly in London, cheered by Mrs. Leigh's presence, yet with his 'soul scorching in the blackest mood.' . . .

"When next he ventures into the field of secret history, and attacks a dead lady's reputation, Mr. Edgcumbe may find it desirable to pay close attention to his dates, his topography, and his logic." . . .

Mr. Lang wrote again much to the same effect, "A Scapegoat for Byron," in the *Morning Post*, October 7th, 1910, in which he gibbeted yet another foolish book, "The Love Affairs of Lord Byron," by Mr. Francis Gribble. Complete confirmation of Mr. Lang's intuition exists (unknown to him) in the unpublished letters of Lord Byron to Lady Melbourne, which form an almost daily record of his movements from September, 1812, until the end of 1814. Lady Melbourne was the mother-in-law of Lady Caroline Lamb, and Byron's extremely intimate and confidential relations with the elder lady began with their combined endeavours to restrain the vagaries of poor half-mad Lady Caroline. He soon fell into the habit of writing to Lady Melbourne full descriptions of all his social doings, and especially of his love affairs. The record for the summer of 1813 is particularly full, and nowhere does Mrs. Chaworth's name appear in it.

Byron's *liaison* with Lady Oxford came to an end about June 28th, 1813, when she departed for the Continent with her husband, and immediately after this event Mrs. Leigh came to join him in London, and remained there for some weeks. During the months of July and August and part of September, Byron remained almost uninterruptedly in London, his only absences being two sojourns of a few days at Mrs. Leigh's home, Six Mile Bottom, near Newmarket, and at Cambridge, which is in the same neighbourhood. On August 5th he tells Lady Melbourne that Mrs. Leigh has returned with him from Newmarket to London, and that they contemplate going abroad together. The next few letters are answers to the remonstrances that Lady Melbourne made against this course—remonstrances which evidently helped to shake his resolution (see Chapter II., pp. 33—34).

September 21st finds him at Aston Hall, Rotherham, where (evidently encouraged by Lady Melbourne) he immediately applied himself to a hot courtship of Lady Frances, the young wife of his host and friend, Wedderburne Webster. This was his first acquaintance with the lady, and it is therefore impossible that the words "I am . . . in a far more serious, and entirely new scrape" in his letter to Moore, of August 22nd ("Letters and Journals") should apply to her. With interludes of a few days in London, and of two expeditions for a night or two from Aston to Newstead, he spent his whole time until October 19th at Aston Hall with the Websters. And for the two short stays at Newstead, above mentioned, he had with him the first time Wedderburne Webster alone, and the second time Lady Frances also and all their guests. Mr. Edgcumbe chooses to imagine that at this time Byron went from Newstead to visit Mrs. Chaworth at Annesley. The daily, almost hourly, record of events, that he was now sending to Lady Melbourne, shows that no such thing happened or was ever contemplated.

He was for the moment completely absorbed in his chase of Lady Frances. He cynically describes to Lady Melbourne the poor little lady's agitations and her tearful and fluttering resistance. It is satisfactory to be able to record that, though apparently much moved and shaken, and though she had no love for her foolish and profligate husband, Lady Frances did ultimately resist Byron, and that he was not altogether unchivalrous towards her.

From the end of October until January, 1814, Byron remained in London. He continued to correspond for a time with Lady Frances, and he sent her a picture of himself (see "Letters and Journals," Vol. II., p. 350). He was uneasy lest the husband, who had become suspicious, should challenge him to a duel. All this is minutely reported to Lady Melbourne; but his letters soon begin to show that his thoughts were once more occupied with the same object as in July and August, namely, Augusta Leigh.

On January 8th, 1814, occurs the first mention of Mrs. Chaworth Musters. He tells Lady Melbourne that he had received two letters from his "old love of all loves," and he encloses the last for Lady Melbourne to read and advise upon. He gives a short history of his youthful friendship with Mrs. Chaworth and his boyish adoration of her, and says that they had hardly met since her marriage. Her letters apparently ask him to come and see the writer, and suggest his giving his help and support to her in her matrimonial difficulties. More letters followed, and were again sent on to Byron's correspondent. He is careful to

explain to Lady Melbourne that " she is a *good* girl " and that it is an entirely fraternal part that he is being asked to play. He does not relish the *rôle*, and he does not think that it is in Mrs. Chaworth's own interest that he should take it up. Finally, he decides to go and visit Mrs. Chaworth from Newstead, whither he is bound on January 17th, and where he remained three weeks with Augusta for his companion. But though he says that she (Augusta) especially urged him to do so, he did not go to see Mrs. Chaworth. He writes to Lady Melbourne, February 6th, with some compunction, that what with snowstorms and other obstacles, and his own " sluggishness " on the subject, he finds himself after all leaving Newstead for London, without having paid the important visit.

Three months after this, in April, 1814, was born Elizabeth Medora Leigh. I wish I could print the letter that Byron wrote on the occasion to Lady Melbourne, and other letters from the same series. But though our family possess more than one set of carefully authenticated copies, the letters themselves are not ours to publish.

The only other allusion to Mrs. Chaworth in these letters occurs six months later, on October 31st, 1814. Byron and Augusta had been together at Hastings in July and August of that year, and he writes that " poor Mrs. Chaworth " had gone mad in the house there where she succeeded them as tenant, and was now very ill in London.

Mr. Edgcumbe states that when Bryon left England (two years later) Mrs. Chaworth's " mind gave way." If so, it was not for the first time.

A good and clear account of all that concerns this poor lady will be found in Miss E. C. Mayne's " Byron," Vol. I., Chapter IV.

NOTE II

A PORTRAIT MIS-NAMED LADY BYRON

THE family of the late Lady Byron being convinced that the portrait by Ramsay to which her name is attached in the Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, Vol. IV, p. 66, is a spurious one, I undertook to collect evidence on the subject. This I embodied in an article with illustrations published in *The Connoisseur* of October, 1917, which has since been reprinted as a pamphlet, entitled "A Portrait Mis-named Lady Byron," of a convenient size for keeping with the book. From this I give the following extracts:—

. . . In answer to my inquiries, Messrs. Browne, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, write:—

"We bought the picture at the sale of an old Newcastle solicitor in 1897, who had a taste for buying old paintings. This old collector had bought it at the artist's sale—the artist lived and died in Newcastle. Written on the wooden stretcher of the canvas in a contemporary hand were the words, 'Portrait of Lady Byron.'"

I asked Messrs. Browne and Browne if they could give me names and addresses of any descendants of James Ramsay, but they were unable to do so. The sole evidence, therefore, which connects this picture with Lady Byron is the inscription on the stretcher in an unknown hand, which may or may not be "contemporary." Nowhere in the very voluminous correspondence of Anne Isabella Milbanke and her parents before her marriage and after, in possession of the family, is there the slightest allusion to this portrait or to James Ramsay. There is, on the other hand, frequent mention of the sittings to George Hayter in 1812, and the miniature that he painted was regarded as a satisfactory likeness.[1] Annabella Milbanke was at that time twenty years of age. She is shown as a pretty young girl of slender figure, with brown hair and blue eyes. The nose is somewhat *retroussé* and very clean-cut and refined. The marked characteristic of the face is the breadth of the brow and eyes as contrasted with the very short and somewhat narrow chin. The same proportions may be seen in her portrait as a child by

[1] See p. 184.

Hoppner (*frontispiece*), and again in the daguerrotypes taken in her old age. The portrait by Ramsay, on the other hand, is of a middle-aged woman, large and strongly made, the eyes not far apart, and with no special width of brow, the nose thick and blunt in shape, and the chin decidedly long and rounded.

Byron himself thus describes his future wife :—[1]

"There was something piquant and what we term pretty in Miss Milbanke. Her features were small and feminine, though not regular. She had the fairest skin imaginable. Her figure was perfect for her height, and there was a simplicity, a retired modesty about her which was very characteristic, and formed a happy contrast to the cold, artificial formality and studied stiffness which is called 'fashion.'"

The roundness of her face suggested to Byron the pet name of "Pippin." . . .

The dress in this picture and in the miniature of Lady Byron by Hayter are both of the same period, that of the French Empire; both have the hair dressed in masses of short curls on the forehead, a fashion imitated from old Roman Imperial busts. There is, therefore, nothing to confuse the extreme contrast between the two women portrayed. The elder one is slightly draped about with a lace scarf or veil, an evident effort to minimise the unbecomingness of a tight and scant light-coloured garment on a person of her type. About this portrait Mr. William de Morgan wrote to me some years ago :—

"My dear Lady Lovelace,—The portrait on page 66 of Vol. IV. of Murray and Prothero's 'Byron' is certainly not the late Lady Noel Byron. I was really very familiar with her face in childhood and early manhood, and it would be mere affectation in me to qualify my opinion in order not to seem too positive in my way of stating it.

"I suspect that Lady Anne Blunt is right in thinking this portrait a younger version of that of Mrs. Byron in the same volume.[2] Had I been told that this last had been supposed also to be a portrait of the poet's wife, I should have assigned exactly similar reasons for disputing its authenticity.

"I think if I had to make choice of an epithet that would *not* describe the countenance of the almost ethereally delicate, almost painfully serious, almost disconcertingly precise lady (whom I remember vividly), it would be one that my mind at once applied to the original or originals of each of these portraits—the adjective *jovial*. It may be said that the tragedy of her life

[1] Medwin's "Conversations with Lord Byron," pp. 44, 45.
[2] Portrait by Stewardson, belonging to John Murray, Esq.

had left its mark upon her. But then this supposed portrait is palpably older than she was at the date of its occurrence.

"On the other hand, the word *stoical* associates itself in my mind with Lady Noel Byron—not implying severity or grimness—and I feel sure there was mighty little stoicism in any sense in the original of either of these portraits.

"Murray and Prothero must surely have accepted this portrait on the strength of seemingly indisputable authentication, because so many still living remember the supposed original as plainly as myself. But folk are never to hand when wanted and don't get consulted.

"Believe me, dear Lady Lovelace,
"Always sincerely yours,
"Wm. De Morgan."

(It is, perhaps, now better known than formerly that Mr. De Morgan was not only distinguished as a writer, but also as an artist, and his evidence, therefore, is that of a trained observer.)

I asked Lady Anne Blunt also to put in writing the views I had often heard her express, and she has done so as follows:—

"That portrait to which you refer—of the middle-aged woman dressed in Empire fashions, said to be by James Ramsay, R.A.—at page 66 of Vol. IV. of Murray's 'Letters and Journals' of my grandfather, reminded me at once when I saw it of a picture I possess [1] of my Gordon of Gight great-grandmother. I never was more surprised than on finding it described as being a representation of my Milbanke grandmother, to whom it never could have had the remotest resemblance at any time in her life." . . .

From the "Life of Thomas Woolner, R.A.," by his daughter, page 193:— *May 17th*, 1860.

"Yesterday I had to go and see a cast taken of the left hand of Lady Noel Byron, wife of the poet. The summons said it was essential that an honorable man should do it or I should not have been troubled. I do not much like taking casts of anyone dead, but could not refuse in this case, as I know so many of their friends. But I am glad I did go, for a nobler sight I never saw—she looked as if she were living, and had just dropped to sleep, and as proud as a queen in all her splendour. I think there was never anything finer than her brow and nose. . . . She seems to have been almost adored by those about her. . . ."

[1] This is a replica of the portrait by Stewardson, owned by Mr. John Murray.

NOTE III

BYRON'S HAIR

MISS E. C. MAYNE gives ("Byron," Vol. I., Chapter VIII.), on the authority of Scrope Davies, a story to the effect that Byron's hair was artificially curled. This may seem to be a small matter, but the statement was profoundly irritating to the late Lady Anne Blunt, who flatly denied it. Whatever Byron may have chosen to do to his hair on a particular occasion it *did* curl naturally. Lady Anne said that her grandmother, Lady Byron, was wont to describe her husband's curly head. Lady Anne also argued that the story was disproved by Byron's well-known passion for bathing and swimming on every possible opportunity, and before all sorts of witnesses. Artificial curls will not bear wetting. If Byron had been seen to go into the water with a curly, head and to come out of it with lank and snaky locks, the fact would surely have been recorded. And would so vain a man have ever risked such an *exposé?* But I can produce other evidence.

In a little old mother-o'-pearl box, set in gold, are kept, together with Lady Byron's wedding ring, two small packets, docketed in Lady Byron's handwriting. On the first is written :—

> "This lock of Lord Byron's Hair, I cut off after our marriage. A. I. N. B."

and on the second :—

> "Lord B.'s hair from Fletcher, taken after his death."

In the first packet is a short thick piece of hair, tightly curled in a broad ring. If a finger is inserted in it, the hair closes round it like a spring. The colour is a warm chestnut brown. It is soft enough but not very fine. The vigour of life seems still to be so strong in it, that it is almost incredible that it should have ceased to grow more than a hundred years ago.

In the second packet the piece of hair is longer and thinner. It is of a much duller and darker brown, and here and there is a white thread in it. Instead of one broad ring, there are several small thin ones. It does not curl so vigorously, but it *does* curl.[1]

[1] See letter of September 13th, 1821, p. 305.

NOTE IV

MARY ANNE CLERMONT

WHEN Byron wrote his vitriolic poem, "A Sketch," he chose to pour out the venom that filled his soul upon a humble and faithful creature, of whom he can have known but little, and who had never harmed him or his. Only twelve days before he had written his tender "Fare thee well" to his wife. His mood had now changed, but he could not decently write so soon in bitterness of *her*, nor do more than indirectly accuse her parents.

Mrs. Clermont had never been, as he imagined, a domestic servant. It is intolerable that he should have insulted in her person a whole class of honest folk. She had been Miss Milbanke's governess, and remained a warm friend and trusted counsellor of the whole family. She was never an inmate of Lord Byron's house until the birth of his child, when, as she says in a statement describing the miseries and terrors of the young wife (to which she took her oath), "Mrs. Leigh intreated me to come and sleep in the house at the time of Lady Byron's confinement, saying 'if he continues in this way God knows what he may do!'" "This way" meant Byron's outbreaks of savage aversion for his wife, which alarmed all who witnessed them.[1]

There is no record anywhere in any letters of the family, or statement of Lady Byron's, of any interference on Mrs. Clermont's part in Lord Byron's married life, or any efforts of hers to detach his wife from him. She saw and guessed a good deal, but she does not appear to have been fully confided in by Lady Byron until some time after she had left his roof.

Her important *rôle* began when Sir Ralph Noel came to London to negotiate the separation, and she remained with him at Mivart's Hotel, acting as a kind of confidential secretary. Lady Noel was the greater part of this time at Kirkby with her daughter, and it was Mrs. Clermont who assisted at all the interviews with lawyers, who collected information for them, cross-questioned the doctors about Lord Byron's health, and wrote daily, almost hourly, accounts of all that went on to the two anxious women

[1] See pp. 39—40.

in the country. Lady Byron was tortured with doubt as to her husband's insanity. Mrs. Clermont does her utmost to satisfy her demands for every detail that can be given about him and for every word that the doctors say. Nothing decisive can be got from them. Mrs. Leigh reports confused sayings of Byron's, but against that must be set the fact that he is continually drinking brandy, in spite of all that the doctors can do to prevent it. Mrs. Leigh's letters torment Lady Byron with descriptions of his melancholy and his bad health. Mrs. Clermont writes to Lady Noel: "I have always thought Mrs. Leigh weak about her brother." To Lady Byron she writes: "I have no doubt that, although he has been always wishing and endeavouring to drive you to a separation, his pride at least will suffer dreadfully; but he is a being whose whole talents seem to be employed in bringing unhappiness upon himself, and it is not in the power of any mortal to prevent him doing so."

As to his health, she says: "I find Lord Byron has his dinner and goes to the play as usual. I hope you have got over your alarm about him. Pray do not be so weak as to mind Mrs. Leigh's Ohs and Ahs."

Sir Ralph Noel's firmness in negotiation was evidently doubted by his wife and daughter. Lady Byron writes: "Pray don't let Sir R. stir a step or write a line without the legal counsels. . . . I have some fears of his being led to commit himself by some artful people." Mrs. Clermont assures her that he is being carefully watched over.

When Lady Noel joined the conclave in London for a few days Lady Byron—alone at Kirkby with her child—had a new cause for anxiety. She knew her mother's impetuosity of character. "I hope" (she writes to Mrs. Clermont) "you will find my mother reasonable and temperate." . . . Again three days later:—

"I hope you will keep my mother sober. She will break my heart if she takes up the thing in *bitterness* against him. The more I think of the whole conduct on his part, the more unaccountable it is—I cannot believe him *all bad*, though the case is quite as hopeless as if he were." . . . Again Mrs. Clermont soothes her and preaches patience. Some time must elapse before there can be any certainty about Lord B.'s mental condition.

Throughout this difficult time Mrs. Clermont's influence is always for moderation, for calmness, for generosity as to money terms (in this she was knocking at an open door), and for justice even to the guilty.

On March 9th she writes to Lady Noel: "In regard to Mrs.

Leigh you have I think been very unjust, as I am confident however maliciously he (Byron) may act, it never has been her wish to take it (the child) from A.,[1] nor ever will be, although I fear she must have felt herself much hurt of late by a change of manner on this side. I know she has acted weakly but I do firmly believe her intentions have been good—nor can I ever forget the kindness A. experienced from her the latter part of the time she was in piccadilly (*sic*). Even for her life I believe we may thank Mrs. Leigh."

In the same letter she had written triumphantly: "I have at last the happiness to inform you that this business is in a fair way to be settled, without the *Law*."

Lord Byron, doubtless, knew of her presence at Sir Ralph's side and of the help that she rendered to him and his advisers. Thus his wrath fastened upon her. It is amusing to read her matter-of-fact narrative of events from day to day with her homely comments on them, and to contrast them with his wild and extravagant accusations against her, and his imaginings of dark and mysterious plotting. Her actions were entirely open and honest, and they were not taken until after Lord Byron had himself driven his wife out of his house and had openly declared married life to be intolerable to him. What motive need such a woman have, beyond the simple affection and pity which breathes from all her letters for the young creature who had been her care from childhood?

When Byron wrote the "Fare thee well," he did not send it to his wife. She read it first in print. But when he wrote the "Sketch," a copy was sent at once to the victim. She writes about it to Lady Noel, April 10th, 1816:—

"You and I are now the Objects of his Satire, he has wrote a long copy of verses in which I am a Gorgon and paid by you for some secret service. It is sufficiently Blackguard for any poet of St. Giles's."

She describes the letter she had written to Lord Byron and continues:

"I do not expect any good from the measure, but A. thought it might prevent the publication of the verses."

The letter is as follows:—

April 9, 1816.

My Lord,—

In consequence of an attempt which your Lordship has made to injure my character, I take the liberty of requesting to be made acquainted with the grounds on which I am accused of

[1] Annabella (Lady Byron).

being a false witness and those other charges which you are pleased to alledge against me. If favoured with this information, I have no doubt of being able to prove in the most satisfactory manner that such accusations are wholly unfounded. I have hitherto, my Lord, said very little, nor could I have deemed myself of sufficient importance to have any weight in the scale of public opinion where your Lordship was concerned, had you not yourself attached importance to what you call falsehoods devised by me. The little I have said is *strictly true*, and what more *I may be compelled* to say, shall be equally so, and my name will always be added to whatever I may write hereafter, as it has been to whatever I have written heretofore.[1]

I am, my Lord,
Your Lordship's
Obedient humble servt.
M. A. Clermont.

She may be left with the last word.

[1] This is an allusion to an anonymous letter that she had received in February, which she believed to have been from Lord Byron.

APPENDIX A

EXTRACT FROM COLONEL FRANCIS HASTINGS DOYLE'S LETTER TO ROBERT JOHN WILMOT HORTON ABOUT THE BURNING OF THE MEMOIRS.

Montague Square, May 18th, 1825.

I CERTAINLY did consider myself as, in some degree, representing Lady Byron at the meeting which took place at Murray's. Lady Byron told me at Beckenham, I think the day before, that she had received some communication from Mr Hobhouse on the subject of this manuscript—to the effect, as well as I recollect, that Mr Moore was disposed to deliver it up to Lord Byron's family, and that it was very desirable to obtain it from him—and Lady Byron then requested me to act for her, in the event of its being necessary for her to do anything in the matter. I came to town immediately afterwards but certainly without any *expectation* that I should be called upon to take any steps in the business till I had heard further from her—I found, however, to my surprise that Mr Moore was waiting at my house with a view of speaking to me on the subject. . . .

The only thing in his conversation material to the present point, was that he ended by saying to me, that altho in his opinion many parts of the memoirs might be published without impropriety, yet if Lord Byron's family thought otherwise he was ready to deliver up the whole—he begged me, however, distinctly to bear in mind that by the words "Lord Byron's family" he must be understood not to mean Lady Byron or to include her, as he seemed to think it might not be considered honorable on his part under the circumstances to deliver up papers to her which had been confided to him by Lord Byron, but he appeared to apply the term more particularly to Mrs Leigh. This conversation I communicated to you almost immediately afterwards, and I believe it corresponded with what Mr Moore had previously said to you. My going afterwards to Murray's was quite accidental—you called upon me and requested me to accompany you there, which I did. What passed there it is unnecessary for me to repeat as you were present. I will only observe, however, that Mr Moore having expressly stated to me that he would not deliver up the manuscript to Lady Byron, but that he would place it entirely at

Mrs Leigh's disposal, I did not consider myself as having any power on the part of Lady Byron to oppose or sanction any particular disposition of it which Mrs Leigh might think proper to make, and when you signified her wish that it should be destroyed—I regarded myself only as a witness and not as a party to the proceeding. Lady Byron certainly gave no consent to the *destruction* of the manuscript either directly or indirectly—she never could have known that it was intended to destroy it because I believe that intention was communicated for the first time at the meeting in question: The point at issue before us was not whether the Manuscript should be destroyed but whether it should be suppressed—or partially published.

APPENDIX B

THE following lines, referred to on pp. 34, 35, 36, are taken from a copy which belonged to Lady Byron:

I speak not—I trace not—I breathe not thy name—
There is love in the sound—there is Guilt in the fame—
But the tear which now burns on my cheek may impart
The deep thoughts that dwell in that silence of heart.

2.

Too brief for our passion—too long for our peace—
Was that hour—can it's hope—can its memory cease? [1]
We repent—we abjure—we will break from our chain
We must part—we must fly to—unite it again!

3.

Oh! thine be the gladness—and mine be the Guilt
Forgive me—adored one—forsake—if thou wilt—
But the heart which is thine shall expire undebased
And Man shall not break it whatever thou may'st.

4.

Oh! proud to the mighty—but humble to thee
This soul in it's bitterest moments shall be
And our days glide as swift—and our moments more sweet
With thee at my side—than the world at my feet.

One tear of thy sorrow—one smile of thy love
Shall turn me or fix—shall reward or reprove—
And the heartless may wonder at all I resign
Thy lip shall reply—not to them—but to mine—

[1] The manuscript is not altogether easy to decipher at this place. The line is substituted for an erased line which ought perhaps to be read:

"Were the minutes—whence hours can never release."

APPENDIX B

The first three lines of the 5th stanza were first written :

And thine is that love which I would not forego
Though that heart may be bought by Eternity's woe
But if thine too must suffer—Oh ! take it again,[1]

and then erased and replaced by the four lines which are nearly identical with the printed version.

APPENDIX C

Opening Lines to "Lara."

she is
WHEN ~~thou art~~ gone—the loved, the lost—the one
Whose smile hath gladdened though perchance undone—
Whose name too dearly cherished to impart
Dies on the lip but trembles in the heart ;
sudden
Whose ~~very~~ mention can almost convulse
lightens through
And ~~fires to speed~~ the ungovernable pulse—
so keenly
Till the heart leaps ~~responsive~~ to the word
that hardly
We fear ~~its~~ throb can ~~scarcely~~ beat unheard—
Then sinks at once beneath that sickly chill
That follows when we find her absent still—
such is
When ~~thou art~~ gone—too far again to bless—
Oh God—how slowly comes Forgetfulness—
faithless
Let none complain how ~~idle~~ and how brief
brain's remembrance— bosom's
The ~~mourner's memory~~—or the ~~lover's~~ grief—
Or e'er they thus forbid us to forget—
Let Mercy strip the memory of regret,—
Yet—selfish still—we would not be forgot—
What lip
~~O who~~ dare say—" my Love—remember not,—"

[1] Compare :

" Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blessed—and that I shall die——"
(P. 75 ; quoted from " Manfred.")

~~Azora dearest,~~
Oh best—and dearest—thou whose thrilling name—
My heart adores too deeply to proclaim—
My memory almost ceasing to repine
Would mount to Hope if once secure of thine.—
Meantime the tale I weave must mournful be—
As absence to the heart that ~~pants for~~ lives on thee.—

APPENDIX D

Stanzas to Augusta.

WHEN all around grew drear and dark,
And reason half withheld her ray—
And hope but shed a dying spark
Which more misled my lonely way;

In that deep midnight of the mind,
And that internal strife of heart,
When dreading to be deem'd too kind,
The weak despair—the cold depart;

When fortune changed—and love fled far,
And hatred's shafts flew thick and fast,
Thou wert the solitary star
Which rose and set not to the last.

Oh! blest be thine unbroken light!
That watch'd me as a seraph's eye,
And stood between me and the night,
For ever shining sweetly nigh.

And when the cloud upon us came,
Which strove to blacken o'er thy ray—
Then purer spread its gentle flame
And dash'd the darkness all away.

Still may thy spirit dwell on mine,
And teach it what to brave or brook—
There's more in one soft word of thine
Than in the world's defied rebuke.

Thou stood'st, as stands a lovely tree,
That still unbroke, though gently bent,
Still waves with fond fidelity.
Its boughs above a monument.

The winds might rend—the skies might pour,
But there thou wert—and still wouldst be
Devoted in the stormiest hour
To shed thy weeping leaves o'er me.

But thou and thine shall know no blight
Whatever fate on me may fall;
For heaven in sunshine will requite
The kind—and thee the most of all.

Then let the ties of baffled love
Be broken—thine will never break;
Thy heart can feel—but will not move;
Thy soul, though soft, will never shake.

And these, when all was lost beside,
Were found, and still are fix'd in thee;—
And bearing still a breast so tried,
Earth is no desert—ev'n to me.

APPENDIX E

EXTRACT FROM "CHILDE HAROLD." Canto 3.

LV.

AND there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
Which unto his was bound by stronger ties
Than the church link'd withal; and—though unwed,
That love was pure—and far above disguise,
Had stood the test of mortal enmities
Still undivided, and cemented more
By peril, dreaded most in female eyes;
But this was firm, and from a foreign shore
Well to that heart might his these absent greetings pour!

I.

The castled Crag of Drachenfels
Frowns o'er the wide and winding Rhine,
Whose breast of waters broadly swells
Between the banks which bear the vine,

And hills all rich with blossomed trees,
And fields which promise corn and wine,
And scattered cities crowning these,
Whose far white walls along them shine,
Have strewed a scene, which I should see
With double joy wert *thou* with me.

2.

And peasant girls, with deep blue eyes,
And hands which offer early flowers,
Walk smiling o'er this Paradise;
Above, the frequent feudal towers
Through many green leaves lift their walls of gray;
And many a rock which steeply lowers,
And noble arch in proud decay,
Look o'er this vale of vintage-bowers;
But one thing want these banks of Rhine,—
Thy gentle hand to clasp in mine!

3.

I send the lilies given to me—
Though long before thy hand they touch,
I know that they must withered be,
But yet reject them not as such;
For I have cherished them as dear,
Because they yet may meet thine eye,
And guide thy soul to mine even here,
When thou behold'st them drooping nigh,
And know'st them gathered by the Rhine,
And offered from my heart to thine!

4.

The river nobly foams and flows—
The charm of this enchanted ground,
And all its thousand turns disclose
Some fresher beauty varying round;
The haughtiest breast its wish might bound
Through life to dwell delighted here;
Nor could on earth a spot be found
To Nature and to me so dear—
Could thy dear eyes in following mine
Still sweeten more these banks of Rhine![1]

[1] Mary Godfrey wrote to Thomas Moore, Dec. 24th, 1816: "How do you like Lord Byron's last gloomy productions? He now comes out openly and fairly—the hero of his own tale.

"Some people say those pretty lines, from the banks of the Rhine, are addressed to his sister. Others will not allow that they can be addressed to a sister."—MOORE'S *Correspondence*, viii. 222.

APPENDIX F

Epistle to Augusta.

MY sister! my sweet sister! if a name
Dearer and purer were, it should be thine;
Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim
No tears, but tenderness to answer mine;[1]
Go where I will, to me thou are the same—
A loved regret which I would not resign,
There yet are two things in my destiny—
A world to roam through, and a home with thee.[2]

The first were nothing—had I still the last,
It were the haven of my happiness;
But other claims and other ties thou hast,
And mine is not the wish to make them less.
A strange doom is thy father's son's, and past
Recalling, as it lies beyond redress;
Reversed for him our grandsire's fate of yore,
He had no rest at sea, nor I on shore.

If my inheritance of storms hath been
In other elements, and on the rocks
Of perils overlook'd or unforeseen,
I have sustain'd my share of worldly shocks,
The fault was mine; nor do I seek to screen
My errors with defensive paradox;
I have been cunning in mine overthrow,
The careful pilot of my proper woe.

Mine were my faults, and mine be their reward,
My whole life was a contest, since the day
That gave me being, gave me that which marr'd
The gift,—a fate, or will, that walk'd astray;
And I at times have found the struggle hard,
And thought of shaking off my bonds of clay:
But now I fain would for a time survive,
If but to see what next can well arrive.

[1] Compare: "*a thousand loves*—to *you* from *me*—which is very generous for I only ask *one* in return" (p. 79).

[2] Compare: "What a fool I was to marry—and *you* not very wise—my dear—we might have lived so single and so happy—as old maids and bachelors . . . we are just formed to pass our lives together" (p. 79).

Kingdoms and empire in my little day
I have outlived, and yet I am not old;
And when I look on this, the petty spray
Of my own years of trouble, which have roll'd
Like a wild bay of breakers, melts away:
Something—I know not what—doth still uphold
A spirit of slight patience;—not in vain
Even for its own sake, do we purchase pain.

Perhaps the workings of defiance stir
Within me,—or perhaps a cold despair,
Brought on when ills habitually recur,—
Perhaps a kinder clime or purer air,
(For even to this may change of soul refer,
And with light armour we may learn to bear,)
Have taught me a strange quiet, which was not
The chief companion of a calmer lot.

I feel almost at times as I have felt
In happy childhood; trees and flowers and brooks
Which do remember me of where I dwelt
Ere my young mind was sacrificed to books,
Come as of yore upon me, and can melt
My heart with recognition of their looks;
And even at moments I could think I see
Some living thing to love—but none like thee.[1]

Here are the Alpine landscapes which create
A fund for contemplation;—to admire
Is a brief feeling of a trivial date;
But something worthier do such scenes inspire:
Here to be lonely is not desolate,
For much I view which I could most desire,
And, above all, a lake I can behold
Lovelier, not dearer, than our own of old.

Oh that thou wert but with me!—[2] but I grow
The fool of my own wishes, and forget
The solitude which I have vaunted so
Has lost its praise in this but one regret;

[1] Compare in Manfred: "I have wander'd o'er the earth, And never found thy likeness" (p. 75); and p. 79: "I shall never find any one like you."

[2] Compare: "I wish you were in it [this paradise of wilderness] with me and everyone else out of it" (p. 78):

"The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings——"

("Manfred." See p. 71.)

There may be others which I less may show;—
I am not of the plaintive mood, and yet
I feel an ebb in my philosophy,
And the tide rising in my alter'd eye.

I did remind thee of our own dear Lake,
By the old Hall which may be mine no more.
Leman's is fair; but think not I forsake
The sweet remembrance of a dearer shore:
Sad havoc Time must with my memory make,
Ere *that* or *thou* can fade these eyes before;
Though, like all things which I have loved, they are
Resign'd for ever, or divided far.

The world is all before me; I but ask
Of Nature that with which she will comply—
It is but in her summer's sun to bask,
To mingle with the quiet of her sky,
To see her gentle face without a mask,
And never gaze on it with apathy.
She was my early friend, and now shall be
My sister—till I look again on thee.

I can reduce all feelings but this one;
And that I would not;—for at length I see
Such scenes as those wherein my life begun.
The earliest—even the only paths for me—
Had I but sooner learnt the crowd to shun,
I had been better than I now can be;
The passions which have torn me would have slept;
I had not suffer'd, and *thou* hadst not wept.[1]

With false Ambition what had I to do?
Little with Love, and least of all with Fame;
And yet they came unsought, and with me grew,
And made me all which they can make—a name.
Yet this was not the end I did pursue;
Surely I once beheld a nobler aim.
But all is over—I am one the more
To baffled millions which have gone before.

And for the future, this world's future may
From me demand but little of my care;
I have outlived myself by many a day;
Having survived so many things that were;

[1] Compare: "What is she now? a sufferer for my sins" (quoted at p. 73 from "Manfred").

My years have been no slumber, but the prey
Of ceaseless vigils; for I had the share
Of life which might have fill'd a century,
Before its fourth in time had pass'd me by.

And for the remnant which may be to come
I am content; and for the past I feel
Not thankless,—for within the crowded sum
Of struggles, happiness at times would steal
And for the present I would not benumb
My feelings further.—Nor shall I conceal
That with all this I still can look around
And worship Nature with a thought profound.

For thee, my own sweet sister, in thy heart
I know myself secure, as thou in mine;
We were and are—I am, even as thou art—
Beings who ne'er each other can resign;[1]
It is the same, together or apart,
From life's commencement to its slow decline
We are entwined—let death come slow or fast,
The tie which bound the first endures the last!

APPENDIX G

(Mrs. Villiers's Copy of Miss Mercer Elphinstone's surreptitious copy, from proof lent by Murray to a friend of Miss Mercer Elphinstone.)

STANZAS TO ——— [AUGUSTA].

Differences in the Printed Version given in the Margin.

THO' the day of my destiny's over
And the star of my fate had declined—
Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find—
Tho' thy soul with my grief was acquainted
It shrunk not to share it with me—
And the love which my spirit hath painted
It never hath found but in thee—[2]

[1] Compare: "We are the last persons in the world—who ought—or could cease to love one another——"

"I am by a crowd of circumstances removed from the only being who could ever have loved me—or whom I can unmixedly feel attached to——" (pp. 78, 79).

[2] Compare:

"her whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love,—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The lady Astarte, his——"

("Manfred," quoted at p. 71.

2.

Then when nature around me is smiling
The last smile which answers to mine
I will* not believe it beguiling *do not
Because it reminds me of thine—
And when winds are at war with the Ocean
As the breasts I believ'd in with me—
If their billows excite an emotion
It is that they bear me from thee—[1]

3.

Tho' the rock of my lost* hope is shivered *my last
And its fragments are sunk in the wave hope
Tho' I feel that my Soul is delivered
To pain—it shall not be its slave—
There is many a pang to pursue me
They may crush but they shall not condemn* *contemn
They may torture but shall not subdue me
'Tis of *thee* that I think—not of them—

4.

Tho' human—thou didst not deceive me—
Tho' woman—thou didst not forsake—
Tho' loved—thou forborest to grieve me—
Tho' slandered—thou never couldst shake—
Tho' trusted—thou didst not betray* me *disclaim me
Tho' parted—it was not to fly—
Tho' watchful 'twas not to defame me—
Nor mute—that the World might belie—

5.

Yet I blame not the World—nor despise it—
Nor the War of the many with one—
If my Soul was not fitted to prize it
'Twas folly not sooner to shun—
And if dearly that error hath cost me—
And more than I once could foresee
I have found that whatever it lost me
It could not deprive me of thee—

6.

From the wreck of the past which has* perished *hath
Thus much I at least may recall perish'd
It hath taught me that what I most cherished
Deserved to be dearer* than all. *dearest of all

[1] Compare: "who see nothing in England but the country which holds *you*—or around it but the sea which divides us" (p. 83).

In the Desert a fountain is springing—
In the wild* waste there still is a Tree *in the wide
And a bird in the Solitude singing waste
Which speaks to my Spirit of thee !—[1]

[Appendix H, containing passages from M. Paul Bourget's writings applicable to the Byron drama, is omitted. See Introduction, pp. vi.—vii.]

APPENDIX I AND J[2]

Extracts from the "Saturday Review," September 4th to December 25th, 1869.[3]

September 4th, 1869.

THE great Byron mystery has been revealed on authority which, not so much by reason of any confidence which we give to the authenticator of the history, as on the intrinsic and internal evidence of the history itself, we are compelled, though not without some natural misgiving and reluctance, to accept. Mrs. Beecher Stowe tells us her ghastly story in the pages of "Macmillan's Magazine," the editor of which congratulates himself upon being selected as the organ of gratifying the curiosity and interest of the world. We envy neither this gentleman nor his contributor their very peculiar topics of congratulation.

[1] In July, 1816, these stanzas were shown (probably by Madame de Staël to Elizabeth Hervey, who wrote about them (in the same letter which is quoted at pp. 17, 18):

"But to show you his inconsistency, whilst pretending to mourn his separation from your friend, he has filled three Pages of paper not forming a part of 'Childe Harold' with tender effusions addressed to another woman, whom he says, he has ever found true and faithful to him, who is ever in his thoughts, and when forsaken by others, from her alone he derives consolation! Pray who is this paragon?"

[2] The lettering of this Appendix in the original edition is retained.

[3] These able and eloquent pages are still of interest, being one of the very few bright spots in a dreary tangle of misrepresentation. It would be unfortunate if the identity of the acute Saturday essayist were lost, now that former services to a just cause ought to be recognized.

[After the publication of "Astarte" the author was told, on the authority of Mr. Watts Dunton, that these articles had been written by Mrs. Lynn-Linton. This was a mistake. I have now learnt that they were the work of the Rev. William Scott (1813—1872), one of the founders of the *Saturday Review*. The articles in *Temple Bar* (afterwards published as the "Vindication of Lady Byron") were by Mr. John Fox (1800—1880).

By the kindness of Sir John Charles Fox, Senior Master of the Chancery Division (son of Mr. John Fox), I have seen correspondence between these two gentlemen which puts the authorship of their above-named writings quite beyond a doubt.—Ed.]

We shall not be at the trouble of giving an abstract or abridgement of Mrs. Stowe's story. Not one of our readers can be ignorant of its substance, which is that the cause of the separation of Lord and Lady Byron was the discovery by the wife of an adulterous and incestuous connection existing between her husband and the only woman in the world with whom he could commit that crime. Her position towards Lord Byron was that of Tamar to her half-brother Amnon. Mrs. Stowe tells us "that the whole history of Lord and Lady Byron in its reality has long been perfectly understood in many circles in England." Mrs. Stowe always writes in a loose, careless, inaccurate way, and in this instance she moreover indulges in very bad taste in telling her story. . . . We are sorry to say that we believe it to be the true one. . . . The very first time it was ever announced in print was three months before Mrs. Stowe's publication. In an able and interesting paper published in the "Temple Bar Magazine" of June last on "Lord Byron's Married Life," [1] as far as we know, this crime of incest was first publicly charged on Lord Byron, and we are bound to say that that article, remarkable for ability, good taste, and right feeling, has had far more effect in compelling us to the conclusion that this is the true solution of the mystery than Mrs. Stowe's very unpleasant narrative, or any confidence which we repose in a writer so inaccurate, and in other ways so positively repellent, as the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Again, we say, we accept this version, not on account of the external evidence which is brought to support it, so much as on its internal probability. . . .

Is the story, through whatever unpleasant channel it reaches us, true? Have we got the solution of the great mystery? For the truth of the story is quite independent of the particular form, which is unsatisfactory enough, in which we receive it. As we have already hinted, we think, though we think it with reluctance, that the balance of probability is on the whole much in its favour. It is intrinsically probable, and something more than probable, not only from internal evidence but from the whole cloud of small corroborative external details, not one of which perhaps is in itself conclusive, but the cumulative force of which taken together seems to be irresistible. The argument is of a critical nature, and though possibly weak in this or that single link, becomes very impressive from the multitude of indirect and casual illustrations and slight confirmations of which it is capable. . . .

We have gone through Moore's Memoirs relating to this period, 1813–1815, and it is unquestionable and undeniable that it affords

[1] See "Astarte," pp. 113, 143 and 161.

great corroboration to Mrs. Stowe's—or Lady Byron's—narrative. Byron's life up to that time had been bad enough; but now there appears something secret, mysterious, and hidden, a frequent reference to some especial guilt and agony, which shows that something had happened very different from all that had happened before; some guilt different in kind from the unclean and coarse and drunken life of the previous years. It is not so much on what Byron says, as on what he hints, that we found this judgement. There is, we all know, in cases of great sin a strange, unnatural, or perhaps natural, dallying and playing round the fatal secret. It is concealed perhaps, but it is always on the very point of being revealed, as though, which is perhaps true, there were some horrid fascination in crime which all but compels the criminal to avow it. Read by the lurid light of Mrs. Stowe's narrative, what Byron said in his letters to Moore at this time, what he inserted in his Diary, and the poems which he wrote, become of the highest interest and significance. . . .

From other notices, the exchange of books and letters, we find that he was in daily communication with his half-sister. May 4th, he sent Moore a song, which, by the way, was never published till after his death, which seems at this time significant:

> "I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name,
> There is grief in the sound, there is guilt in the fame;
>
> * * *
>
> Too brief for our passion, too long for our peace
> Were those hours—can their joy or their bitterness cease?
> We repent—we abjure—we will break from our chain,
> We will part—we will fly—to unite it again!
> Oh! thine be the gladness and mine be the guilt," etc., etc.

As we have said, not one of these expressions is conclusive, but taken together they become important.

We now come to the separation. . . . Dr. Lushington, who had at first thought a reconciliation probable, on further information communicated by Lady Byron, altered his opinion, declared it to be "impossible," and added that if such an idea should be entertained, he could not, professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it." The writer in "Temple Bar," to whose acute paper, published three months before Mrs. Stowe's, we have already done justice, argues with great force that whatever the offence in Lord Byron's case was, it must have been in the eyes of this great ecclesiastical lawyer equivalent to that which the House of Lords had in a celebrated judgement declared to be of

such an aggravated nature that " duty to God and man " made reconciliation impossible. That offence was incest.[1] . . .

As soon as Byron was clear of England, he wrote the famous verses " To Augusta," which were never published till after his death, beginning,

" My sister, my sweet sister."

It is certainly open to anybody to say that it might be only fraternal love which dictated the very strong language of this remarkable poem ; it is also certain on the other hand, that, read by the light of Lady Byron's story, these strange lines are also susceptible of a very different and blacker interpretation. As we have said before, taken by itself, this poem concludes nothing ; taken in connection with other things, it seems to mean a good deal. The person to whom they were addressed, it must not be forgotten, had a husband, and, as the " Peerage " tells us, " issue." Poets may address their sisters in very affectionate language, but they seldom talk of living, and living for ever, with a married woman, even though she may be a favourite half-sister :

" Go where I will, to me thou art the same,
A loved regret which I would not resign.
There yet are two things in my destiny—
A world to roam through, and a home with thee.
The first were nothing—had I still the last,
It were the haven of my happiness ;
. . . . even at moments I could think I see
Some living thing to love, but none like thee.

* * *

Oh ! that thou wert but with me !

* * *

Had I but sooner learnt . . . .
I had been better than I now can be ;
The passions which have torn me would have slept,
I had not suffered, and *thou* hadst not wept.

* * *

We were, and are—I am, even as thou art—
Beings who ne'er each other can resign ;

* * *

We are entwined, let death come slow or fast."

Byron's first literary work after the separation was to write " Manfred," a ghastly tale, the interest of which centres on incest. We are quite aware that poets and dramatists are not to be identified with the characters or plots which they draw. Racine

[1] See " Astarte," p. 143.

wrote "Phèdre," but this is no proof that he or any other tragedian practised the vices of the characters which he draws. We certainly cannot agree with Mrs. Stowe's wild assertion that "anybody who reads 'Manfred' with this story in his mind will see that it"—the story, we suppose—"is true." But when it is said, on the other hand, as has been said by a writer in the "Times," "that it is almost impossible that a man with the secret of incest on his soul would have written 'Manfred,'" we should say, for the psychological reason to which we have already referred, this is a very likely thing for him to do.

September 11th, 1869.

. . . Those who, like ourselves, have, with whatever reluctance, been driven to the conclusion that on the whole the charge made against Lord Byron is likely to be true, because the moral probabilities against its truth seem to be outweighed by the probabilities, however disagreeable, for its truth, can treat with contemptuous indifference the tedious iteration of the paralogism that Lord Byron could not have committed a certain crime because he wrote very fine poems. And yet the majority of the writers in the newspapers harp upon no other string. For ourselves, we shall not enter into controversy with fervid undergraduates, who in the middle of the Long Vacation date from Trinity College, Oxford, nor with the impertinent and utterly untrue suggestion of another newspaper correspondent, that the writer on Byron's life in "Temple Bar" and the writer in the "Saturday Review" are one and the same; but we content ourselves with reviewing the case as it stands at the moment. . . .

Mrs. Stowe has been guilty of a scandalous breach of faith as regards Lady Byron, and of extremely bad taste. . . . We are not of those who think that the publication of the true story of Byron would be in itself harmful; rather the reverse. Our objection is to the time and the manner, not to the matter. The greater Byron's fame and powers, the greater right has the world to know the true man. But that revelation, we think, ought to have been made in 1816; it ought to have been made by Lady Byron herself, or at any rate on her express and undoubted authority, and by those commissioned to execute this stern judicial act. But to get it at this time, and in this indirect and surreptitious way, in a form so nauseous, from such a source, and for such objects, is a proceeding which we are glad to say has met with almost universal indignation, contempt and condemnation. . . .

We dismiss very rapidly the "hallucination" theory. Its

controversial value seems, in the eyes of the newspaper correspondents, chiefly to depend on the importance which they attach to a sonorous polysyllable. We do not profess altogether to understand an hallucination of any sort, certainly not of this sort —an hallucination which involves so horrible a charge, and which surrounds such a charge with all sorts of minute, and perfectly unnecessary, details. Lady Byron's character, as she and her friends give it, is one with which we do not altogether sympathize ; indeed, we rather dislike, because perhaps we are unable to realize it. But that her character was very peculiar Lady Anne Barnard[1] shows as clearly as Mrs. Stowe does. That character, be it what it may, is one, we should say, *prima facie*, least capable of being led away by, or indulging in an hallucination—whatever hallucinations may be. The upshot of the whole matter and the final alternative is this : Either we must accept this hallucination theory, or we must accept Lady Byron's story. Further than this the matter cannot be carried.

September 25th, 1869.

The question is whether what Lady Byron communicated to Mrs. Stowe in 1856 is at variance with what she communicated to Lady Anne Barnard in 1816 ; and further, whether an absolute impossibility is established that Lady Byron could, at the time of the separation in 1816, have entertained the particular charge which she preferred in 1856. . . .

1. The carriage scene on the wedding-day. In our last article we adduced reasons for coming to the very opposite conclusion from Lord Lindsay's on this matter. We still assert that there is no substantial difference between the two accounts. To establish their inconsistency they should both be authenticated by the same narrator at first hand. If we had two documents, one written by Lady Byron in 1816, and another written by Lady Byron in 1856, and if we found Lady Byron writing one thing in

[1] Lady Byron's communications to Lady Anne Barnard were all made in 1816—not 1818 as was incorrectly stated by Lord Lindsay in a letter (September 3rd, 1869) to the "Times."

Lady Byron saw Lady Anne Barnard in September, 1816, at the beginning (not the end) of a severe two months' illness which kept Lady Anne in bed till November. After recovery, Lady Anne wrote (November 28th, 1816) to Lady Byron about the *third* Canto of "Childe Harold." Lady Byron's answer (printed by Lord Lindsay in 1869) was dated December 2nd, 1816, as is proved by the draft in her own handwriting, and the inaccuracy of shifting the date by two years tends to reduce Lord Lindsay's authority on this subject within modest proportions.

1816 and another in 1856, we should say that there was an inconsistency. What, however, we have is the account of two narrators, each giving the substance of two different oral communications; and we maintain that the differences are so slight, and the general agreement so complete between the two versions, that the separate accounts confirm, rather than confute, each other. In other words, we apply to these two documents the familiar method by which history and criticism are enabled to reconcile narratives of the same facts which come to us through different channels. . . .

Many writers—from whom we select the vigorous writer of a high-toned letter in the "Times,"—"A Reader of Byron's Letters,"[1] which appeared in the same number with Lord Lindsay's second letter—declare that the accusation of incest with his half-sister was known to all Byron's familiar associates. Our own inquiries among those who were Byron's contemporaries bear out this very important assertion. The charge, whether true or false, dates from 1816, not from 1856. Lord Lindsay proceeds: Lady Byron could not have entertained belief in her husband's incest in 1816, because, . . . in talking and writing to Lady Anne Barnard, no trace of the charge exists . . . we are surprised that a person of Lord Lindsay's good sense cannot see that Lady Byron's half-confidence given to Lady Anne &c. . . . prove absolutely nothing. We can quite understand, and we see a score of reasons for the fact, that Lady Byron, generally speaking, never told the whole truth. Is it so very rare, or so very wrong a thing only to tell half the truth when to tell the whole truth would do a vast deal of harm? We can conceive a thousand conversations, letters, and documents emanating from Lady Byron which spoke of many troubles of the marriage, and yet said nothing of the incest. But a thousand or two thousand such documents would not show that there was not something behind, and worse, which, for reasons good or bad, Lady Byron still thought proper to hide. Lady Byron told Lady Anne many of her sorrows; therefore she told them all; therefore one greater sorrow never could have existed. Merely to state this weakest of all arguments, that to divulge half the truth is inconsistent with knowing the whole truth, is to confute it. Put a parallel case. A woman is robbed and ravished; there may be most forcible reasons why she should say nothing of the rape, though she often referred to the robbery. Therefore, because she always talked of the robbery, the rape never existed. This is Lord Lindsay's argument. . . .

[1] The same letter that is referred to in "Astarte," p. 126.

Lord Lindsay goes on to express his belief that "Byron was hardly used in being denied a categorical answer to his rightful demand, Why have you cast me off?" To which we answer that there is no ground whatever for supposing that Byron did not know his wife's grounds for enforcing the separation. What he complains of is, that he "never could get any specific charge in a tangible shape"; which he might well say—and there is no proof that he ever did more than *say* it—knowing that the challenge was a very cheap one, and that after the deed of separation it amounted to nothing, since his wife had got all by the separation that she wanted, and moreover had probably pledged herself, or anyhow had the strongest motives, to secrecy. And this is very important; had Byron been really sincere in his professed wish to have the matter fairly fought out and the whole thing judicially investigated, it was quite in his power to compel the wife to state her reasons and show her whole cause. Lord Byron might have declined to sign the separation deed, and then Lady Byron must have produced her case; but he signed it. And if he had persisted in his refusal to agree to the separation, and if Lady Byron had not given her reasons, he must have known very well that it was always open to him to institute a suit for the restitution of conjugal rights, which would have brought out the specific charges in a most tangible shape. That he did not take that course shows that he dared not; and in the teeth of this fact we set little store upon the mere talk about his wish and anxiety for the real reasons on which Lady Byron acted.

Into Lord Lindsay's remaining argument we must decline to follow him. It is the merely popular *ad captandum* talk, that let Lord Byron be what he may, let all the evidence be on one side, we will not examine it. He dwells in the love of the British people; his genius is a star which no malignant vapours can obscure; we must give Byron credit for not having been a malignant demon, because we do not like to believe it. This sort of bombast reflects as little credit on our estimate of morality as it does on our critical sagacity. . . a fiendish mockery of good, a persistent and malignant hatred of virtue, yet a belief in it, and a concentrated venomous delight in scoffing at what mankind has been taught to believe to be the noble, the virtuous, the just, the beautiful, and the true, make up the Byron of Byron's works and Byron's letters. The Byron of the "True Story" is the complement of the Byron of "Don Juan"; it just reveals and completes the whole character. After the glorious ode, "The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece," which stirs the heart like a trumpet, Byron goes on in the very next stanza:

" His strain displayed some feeling—right or wrong :
And feeling in a poet is the source
Of others' feeling : but they are such liars,
And take all colours—like the hands of dyers."

On this fiendish mock and sneer, worthy of Goethe's demon, Jeffrey remarks by characterizing it as " a strain of cold-blooded ribaldry, in which all good feelings are excited only to accustom us to their speedy and complete extinction, and we are brought back from their transient and theatrical exhibition to the staple and substantial doctrine of the work, the non-existence of constancy in woman or honour in man, and the folly of expecting to meet with any such virtues or of cultivating them for an unbelieving world." [1] The Byronic Gospel of Hell could not have

[1] " ' Don Juan ' indeed has great power ; but its power is owing to the force of the serious writing, and to the oddity of the contrast between that and the flashy passages with which it is interlarded. . . . He hallows in order to desecrate ; takes a pleasure in defacing the images of beauty his hands have wrought ; and raises our hopes and our belief in goodness to Heaven only to dash them to the earth again, and break them in pieces the more effectually from the very height they have fallen. Our enthusiasm for genius or virtue is thus turned into a jest by the very person who has kindled it, and who thus fatally quenches the sparks of both. It is not that Lord Byron is sometimes serious and sometimes trifling, sometimes profligate, and sometimes moral—but when he is most serious and most moral, he is only preparing to mortify the unsuspecting reader by putting a pitiful hoax upon him. This is a most unaccountable anomaly. It is as if the eagle were to build its eyry in a common sewer, or the owl were seen soaring to the mid-day sun. Such a sight might make one laugh, but one would not wish or expect it to occur more than once." (Hazlitt, " Spirit of the Age.")

An opposite criticism of great force is contained in a letter from the Rev. Frederick William Robertson to Lady Noel Byron, dated July 18, 1850 :

" Nay, even that sarcasm & that bitter mode of turning into ridicule those feelings which at the beginning of a stanza he had put out so affectingly, & which had formed the whole tone of his earlier works—a bitterness which all the reviews of the day exclaimed against as unnatural &c. &c.—was to me in the last work an indication of returning nature, & a proof that experience had done her work. For what could Eve in Eden have learnt more impressively than that the Beauty & the Knowledge of which she had been enamoured were not the tree of life—that in those very feelings of romance of hers lay her chief danger—& that the voice which seemed to her an angel's whisper was only a serpent's hiss—when she found herself on the very verge of hell at the moment when she expected to be ' as the Gods ' ? Nothing is to me more instructive & more mysteriously true to life than those sudden sneers in the midst of sublimities of feeling—as if to say—' I know what all this means & how it ends—and yet how beautiful it is to feel ! ' "

And the late distinguished reviewer, G. S. Venables, Q.C., considered (in the " Fortnightly Review," August, 1883) that : " Don Juan, another and a pleasanter reflection of his own personality, may, perhaps, have indicated an approach to a more healthy conception of life."

been more summarily or more completely described than in this famous language of Jeffrey.

* * *

The only other contribution to this Byron-Stowe literature which takes an ambitious line is a pamphlet originally published in the "Standard," and authenticated by Mr. Alfred Austin, under the title of "A Vindication of Lord Byron." Mr. Austin has certainly succeeded in closing all controversy with ourselves; but his admirers, among whom he is himself the chief, may judge of his powers to conduct any critical controversy by the following comic specimen:

"The argument that if an allusion to incest can be construed out of any passage of 'Manfred,' everybody must see that Mrs. Stowe's story is true, and that Byron must have committed incest with his sister [an argument never adduced by any one out of Bedlam or, as far as we know, in Bedlam], may be dismissed with the remark that, if it is good for anything, it is good to show that Byron committed murder as well . . . whereas even Mrs. Stowe's fabulous account of poor Mrs. Leigh bears testimony to the fact that she was murdered neither by her brother nor by anybody." Why? because in "Manfred" the incestuous sister Astarte is murdered by Manfred, the proof of such murder being contained in the following passage:

"*Manfred.* I loved her, and destroyed her.
Witch. With thy hand?
Manfred. Not with my hand, but heart—which broke her heart;
It gazed on mine, and withered. *I have shed*
Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed;
I saw—and could not stanch it."

Even a child can see that the murder which Manfred owns to was a metaphorical one, the murder of a broken heart, the blood anything but material and arterial, in shedding which the metaphorical sister-slayer used "not his hand but heart." What Astarte died of was not a stabbed, but a broken heart. The expressions are figurative throughout.

This mention of "Manfred" enables us to refer to a minor point on which we have been, not misunderstood, but wilfully misrepresented. We never said that, because Byron made incest the subject of one of the first works that he wrote after the separation, therefore he committed incest. We expressly observed that to say this would be as ridiculous as to say that Racine committed incest because he wrote the "Phèdre." What we did say was, that it furnished an indirect, not conclusive, but very noticeable, indication of the state of mind in which Byron

wrote this tragedy on incest; that there was some secret, mysterious, and unavowed cause for his special interest in the subject of "Manfred" at that time. Passages have been produced from Byron's letters to show that "Manfred" has nothing to do with Mrs. Leigh. Byron, we are told, says that "the germs of 'Manfred' are to be found in the journal which he sent to Mrs. Leigh before he left Switzerland." And, it is asked, "if the germs were already known to Mrs. Leigh, why inform her of them in a journal?" The answer is obvious; the germs in the journal were the sketches of scenery and the external accompaniments of the drama; the moral germ was something very different. We have already said that it is a very striking and perhaps significant thing that Byron, writing to Murray in 1817, says, speaking of the supposed origin of "Manfred," "The conjecturer is out and knows nothing of the matter. *I had a better origin than he can devise or divine for the soul of him.*" [1] We will add another passage which we have more recently discovered in the Byron Correspondence. Writing to Murray, the 7th of June, 1820, Byron expressly anticipates and confutes the objection that the scenery of the Alps was all that suggested "Manfred." "I never read the 'Faust'; but it was the Steinbach [Staubbach?—L.] and the Jungfrau, AND SOMETHING ELSE, much more than Faustus, that made me write 'Manfred.'" Perhaps somebody will tell us what he thinks this "something else," this "better origin than any conjecturer can devise or divine" for "Manfred," was. Byron himself, in 1820, admits that he had "some difficulty in extricating himself from 'Manfred.'" Of course the two passages do not prove the incest; but, slipping out in this accidental way, these dark references to some mysterious and secret origin of "Manfred" are, in connection with the "True Story," very remarkable things for Byron to have said.

[1] This particular letter was communicated to Mrs. Leigh, who wrote about it to Lady Byron (August 5th, 1817):

"I have to relate—that I yesterday had 2 letters sent me to read to Mr M——— in one there was mention of a *critique* which had been sent upon M.[anfred] & a request to have part of it which had by mistake been omitted & which alluded to the '*origin of this dreadful story*'—that 'whoever the Critic might be he was mistaken as he had a foundation for it which for ye Soul of him he could not divine'—I may not give you the *words* exactly—but that was the *sense* of the paragraph—& I don't think there is any remedy for the object of his persecution—but it often occurs to me, that it is impossible any longer to remain *silent* to him—& only the fear of encreasing the evil has hitherto kept me so—sometimes I am inclined to remain so—& leave all to Providence—& yet I think it is wrong *not* to do any thing in one's power to avert evils, at least any thing that is not wrong—& for my children's sake I am more anxious than for myself individually."

October 16th, 1869.

When Byron might have enforced a public investigation he submitted to a separation: when a public investigation was impossible he professed his willingness to take a course which he knew very well could not be taken.

Can any contradiction be more complete? Lady Byron plainly and unequivocally asserts that her husband consented to a separation only under the terror of the threat of going into Court. Lord Byron says that he all along, and up to the very last, offered to go into Court. The point, therefore, to which the issue is narrowed is simply this. Are we to believe Lord Byron or Lady Byron?

His whole life was one living lie;[1] and yet we are asked to believe his assertion, backed as it is by no tittle of evidence, and in terms and in every detail contradicted by Lady Byron. What "the document" produced so ostentatiously in the "Academy"[2] tells us is only what we knew before, and what when known is absolutely worthless, and utterly beside the only question worth considering, which is simply this: Whether Lord Byron was guilty of the crime which undoubtedly his wife believed him to have committed; or whether Lady Byron herself invented—for the hallucination theory is simply puerile—a charge the blackness and guilt of which are not surpassed by the wickedness of the crime alleged.

October 23rd, 1869.

We are not at all surprised at the importance which is attached to the article on "the Byron Mystery" which appears in the

[1] Or rather—was not the life of Byron an incontestable truth which was written down by impostors?—much as Chateaubriand once said of a greater than Byron: "La vie de Bonaparte était une vérité incontestable, que l'imposture s'était chargée d'écrire."

[2] The paper referred to was written by Lord Byron at the instigation of Matthew Gregory Lewis, who reported one of Brougham's indiscretions, which ought not to have been noticed, and that Hobhouse and other friends had endeavoured to keep from Byron's knowledge. On going to Byron one day in August, 1817, near Venice, Hobhouse "found Monk Lewis there and this paper just written and sealed—he, Byron—in a state of the greatest agitation calling on Hobhouse to prove that he had done everything to induce you [*Lady Byron*] to come *into Court*! & left y^e^ room desiring Hobhouse to read y^e^ Paper—that he, Hobhouse, had tried *Heaven & Earth* to persuade him not to give it to Monk Lewis (whom he abused) *in vain*—& that only the hour after it was *gone*, Byron expressed regret he had given and written it!" (The Honble. Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron, April 17th, 1818.)

It was a ludicrous mistake of Byron's that Brougham had been one of Lady Byron's counsel, for which there never was any foundation. But in consequence of this blunder, Byron was always far more excited about Brougham's misdeeds (which certainly were gross enough) than was called for by Brougham's intrinsic importance.

"Quarterly Review" just published. . . . A most able counsel has been engaged, and has spoken well to his brief, addressing the jury in the well-known free and imperious way in which an advocate hopes to convince public judgement on easy terms because he has easily convinced himself. We must remark, however, that unless he had imported some new, and we will at once admit startling, evidence into the case, there would be nothing to be said, except that the "Quarterly" Reviewer only repeats in better language and with the skill of a veteran practitioner, the talk which has been talked in the newspapers for the last six weeks. We have the same protest against the wickedness of meddling with the "world-wide fame and influence" of Byron, and the article, as a whole, though in very good language, only echoes our Tupper's plea:

> "Our English hearts and hearths must not endure
> The poison-fumes of a sensation-story;
> Nor an unproved tale, confused, impure,
> Defraud us of our Byron's classic glory."

With some main particulars of the Reviewer's moral code, and therefore with his general estimate of Byron, we are in such direct conflict that we approach the whole subject, not only from different sides, but with different prepossessions. The Reviewer thinks that "Don Juan" is a work suited for "family use"; he thinks that "to test genius by morality is almost ludicrous"; and so far is he carried away by his admiration of "the true and noble qualities" of Byron—man as well as poet—that he ventures to misrepresent, as well as condescends to laugh at, those whose detestation of Byron's life is only surpassed by their conviction that his writings as a whole "have a tendency to destroy all belief in the reality of virtue . . . that he has exerted all the powers of his powerful mind to convince his readers, both directly and indirectly, that all ennobling pursuits and disinterested virtues are mere deceits or illusions—hollow and despicable mockeries for the most part, and, at best, but laborious follies . . . that love, patriotism, valour, devotion, constancy, ambition, are all to be laughed at, disbelieved in, and despised." . . . And we must remind the "Quarterly" Reviewer that when he denounces as cant and hypocrisy the ludicrous notion of testing genius by morality, what he must mean, if he has any meaning, is that in the presence of such genius as Byron has displayed we have no right to protest when that genius is employed only to represent all virtue as an illusion, and all truth and nobleness of soul as a thing to be mocked and insulted. We at least are not denouncing

Byron's poetry because he has been charged with incest; but as we have felt, long before Mrs. Stowe wrote, that Byron's poetry as a whole was most mischievous, we certainly did not decline to investigate the "True Story" because Byron wrote "Childe Harold."

This point, as we shall never agree with the "Quarterly Review" on its importance, we pass by, and proceed to the substance of the article. . . The "Quarterly" Reviewer admits that this story—*i.e.*, the charge of incest—told by Lady Byron, was no delusion or illusion, the growth of her later years, but was the substance of the famous communication to Dr. Lushington in 1816. This is certainly clearing the ground, and the action is now at the closest quarters. But, says the "Quarterly" Reviewer, whatever Lady Byron stated, whether in 1816 or forty years later, in the way of a charge of incest inculpating Mrs. Leigh, was, and Lady Byron must have known it to be, false. Why? Because, at the very time of the separation the necessity of which Lady Byron based on this alleged incest, we find her writing in the most affectionate language to this very Mrs. Leigh whom she was charging at this very moment with this very incest. . . . The "Quarterly" Reviewer, therefore, argues that, whatever Lady Byron said to her legal advisers, she could have had no ground for it, and that her conduct can only be accounted for on the hypothesis of insanity or monomania. "There is no other hypothesis but insanity on which the moralist can charitably account for her conduct"; and then we are told of her "monomania" and "self-delusions." The letters are certainly very remarkable . . . We are not going to extenuate the force of these letters; and we shall not insinuate a doubt as to their genuineness. We feel confident that the "Quarterly" Reviewer is much too scrupulous not to have investigated this point. They seem to have come upon him much as they will come upon other people, as a surprise; but a surprise so agreeable to his previous prepossessions, that he considers that their internal evidence will convince everybody without any external vindication of their startling contents. Not a word is said to account for their unexpected appearance; they are introduced in the briefest fashion as "letters and extracts addressed by Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh, now published for the first time." They could only have reached the Reviewer through Mrs. Leigh's surviving daughter, and, as it is not at all likely that these five or six fragments stand alone, the possessor of these epistolary treasures is probably to be congratulated on the possession of other letters from Lady Byron, and most likely from Lord Byron, which must have great literary and other value. We

trust that we may not be misunderstood as impugning the genuineness of these curious letters; but as to the way in which they reach us, and the very curious circumstance that they so exactly and precisely fit into the gap which was wanted to be filled up, that they begin and end where they do, and that they appear at this particular moment and in this very nick, or rather in so many nicks, of time and place, these things surprise us almost as much as the contents of the letters themselves.

But has it occurred to the "Quarterly" Reviewer that whatever difficulties these new materials must present to those who—as it has been phrased—"hesitate to reject Mrs. Stowe's account of the reason that led to the separation of Lord and Lady Byron," they present the same difficulties to himself on his own view of the case? It is, we are told, quite impossible that Lady Byron should have believed in the charge of incest while she was writing to Mrs. Leigh in the terms we have quoted. But, as a matter of fact, according to the "Quarterly" Reviewer's own testimony, she said that she believed it, and expressed this belief to Dr. Lushington and the military man. The objection to the "True Story" is the co-existence of the charge of incest and the affectionate letters to Mrs. Leigh. The objection to the "Quarterly" Reviewer's story is co-existence of these affectionate letters and a monomaniacal or insane belief in a non-existent crime. Surely this is six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. It is, we admit, next to incredible that Lady Byron could have believed in the charge and have written the letters; but it is equally incredible —which is the "Quarterly" Reviewer's position—that under the influence of monomania or insanity she could have preferred the charge and still have written the letters. Sane or insane makes very little or no difference in the matter. That Lady Byron made the charge in 1816 the Reviewer admits; and if she made it under the influence of insanity or monomania—as he further argues—her letters to Mrs. Leigh, "now published for the first time," must be as inexplicable to him on his theory as they are to those who have "hesitated to reject the 'True Story.'"

But we have something further to say on this point of insanity, or madness, or hallucination, or whatever it is. Dr. Forbes Winslow,[1] in a letter dated September 8th, and published in the "Standard," and he is a very high authority on such a matter, says:

[1] Born 1810, died March 3rd, 1874—the greatest expert on criminal insanity of his time; appeared as a witness before a Commons' committee; and in many celebrated trials his testimony proved mental disease. (Norman Moore, M.D., "Dictionary of National Biography.")

" It is quite inconsistent with the theory of Lady Byron's insanity to imagine that her delusion was restricted to the idea of his having committed ' incest.' In common fairness we are bound to view the aggregate mental phenomena which she exhibited from the day of the marriage to the final separation and her death. No person practically acquainted with the true characteristics of insanity would affirm that, had this idea of ' incest ' been an insane hallucination, Lady Byron could from the lengthened period which intervened between her unhappy marriage and death, have refrained from exhibiting it, not only to legal advisers and trustees (assuming that she revealed to them the fact), but to others, exacting from them no pledges of secrecy as to her mental impressions. Lunatics do for a time, and for some special purpose, most cunningly conceal their delusions, but they have not the capacity to struggle for thirty-six years, as Lady Byron must have done, with so frightful an hallucination, without the insane state of mind becoming obvious to those with whom they are daily associating. Neither is it consistent with experience to suppose that if Lady Byron had been a monomaniac, her state of disordered understanding would have been restricted to one hallucination. Her diseased brain, affecting the normal action of thought, would in all probability have manifested other symptoms, besides those referred to, of aberration of intellect. During the last thirty years, I have not met with a case of insanity, assuming the hypothesis of hallucination, at all parallel with that of Lady Byron's. I never saw a patient with such a delusion."

This seems to be conclusive as to the hallucination, or monomania, or insanity view. Dr. Winslow is a high authority, and he tells us that such monomania as the " Quarterly " Reviewer attributes to Lady Byron is psychologically impossible. A mind so disordered as to entertain an untrue charge of incest, and to retain this illusion through a long life, must have given way on other points. Such insanity, or mental unsoundness, as the " Quarterly Review " attributes to Lady Byron, Dr. Winslow declines to entertain the notion of.

If, then, we are to yield to the new evidence produced by the " Quarterly Review," and if with Dr. Forbes Winslow we decline for a single moment to believe in Lady Byron's alleged monomania, it comes to this, and nothing short of this—that Lady Byron, finding that in Dr. Lushington's judgement the sixteen [*sic*] reasons [1] alleged by her and her parents in favour of a

[1] The " sixteen reasons for a separation " are a myth. It was a " Quarterly Review " fiction that Lady Byron " prepared a written statement in which sixteen symptoms were mentioned as evidence of insanity." In the version printed by Moore and Murray it was pretended that " articles of impeachment were drawn up against Lord Byron's sanity "—sixteen in number according to them—and of the most watery quality. All this is fabulous as to Lady Byron or her friends.

separation failed, and would not hold water, consciously and maliciously and falsely invented the seventeenth [*sic*]—namely the charge of incest—knowing it to be false. She charged her husband with the most frightful of crimes and charged him falsely, knowing well what she was about. Further, for so far does the "Quarterly Review's" argument drive us, we must conclude that Dr. Lushington at once and without any investigation, and simply on the *ipsa dixit* of this treacherous and calumnious wife, assumed the truth of this wicked charge and acted on it. Is not this proving rather too much? And yet nothing short of this is proved in the "Quarterly Review," if anything is proved. We can but repeat what we have said throughout, and what we insisted on only a week ago, before "the letters now published for the first time" appeared, that the question is—Whether Lord Byron was guilty of the crime which undoubtedly his wife charged him with; or whether Lady Byron herself invented a charge, the blackness and guilt of which are not surpassed by—we will add, are not equal to—the wickedness of the crime alleged? The "Quarterly" Reviewer is to be credited with this success, that in his zeal to defend Byron from a charge which with perfect good faith he was anxious to repel, he has, whether he intended it or not, raised an accusation of deliberate wickedness against Lady Byron which no person of common sense—we lay the matter of good feeling aside—can for a moment entertain.

December 25th, 1869 (*after the publication of* "Medora Leigh").

It is obvious to observe, first, that as far as this hideous autobiography goes, it confirms to the minutest particulars the story told by Mrs. Stowe as told her by Lady Byron. Here is the "child of sin," told by her own sister that she was not her putative father's daughter, subsequently assured of the same fact by Lady Byron, with the addition that she was Lord Byron's daughter, announcing it to a whole crowd of witnesses—Captain De B——, Mr. S——, Sir George Stephen, Dr. Lushington, the Duke of Leeds, Lord and Lady Lovelace, Lady Chichester, all and everybody whom she could get to listen to her story, and above all, confronting her own mother, Mrs. Leigh, with the charge. From not one single person does she meet with a single word of disbelief. Mrs. Leigh, her mother, the person most interested, receives her unnatural child's charge of incest, and does not contradict her. She only never answers the letters. . . .

The "Quarterly" Reviewer, while admitting that the charge

of incest was vaguely floating about, but in an intangible shape, even during Byron's life, and that even as early as the separation in 1816 it was named by Lord Broughton on Byron's part to Mr. Wilmot Horton [1] [*sic*] acting on Lady Byron's part, and at last admitting that it was actually "produced, and brought under Byron's notice, before he left England," goes on in his Postscript to ask, not without indignation, "If Lady Byron was openly to adopt it at all, why she did not do so whilst Colonel and Mrs. Leigh, Lord Broughton, and Mr. Wilmot Horton were still living?" If this Autobiography of Medora Leigh is true at all, it shows that this is precisely what Lady Byron did. . . .

A single word more. We have been repeatedly confronted with the facts—and they are facts—that Lady Byron lived in close and affectionate intercourse with Mrs. Leigh up to the time at least of Lord Byron's death. We have been asked what we can make of the letters published in the "Quarterly Review." We have been reminded that it is totally impossible, contrary to all common sense, that Lady Byron could have believed Mrs. Leigh had been guilty of incest and yet could have maintained the intercourse with her of love and kindness and confidence which undoubtedly she professed. Our answer is that we do not understand it; that we do not profess to be able to account for Lady Byron's character and conduct; and that we cannot reconcile the letters of 1816 with her real conviction of the truth of the charge. And we do not profess to account for this difficulty, because, in the first place, these letters are fragmentary, and cover a very short space of time; because, if we had all the letters written to Mrs. Leigh, either by her brother or her sister-in-law, we might be able to form a judgement; and that as to Lady Byron, her character is very unique, very unintelligible, and one with which as we have no sympathy, so about it we have little knowledge. Anyhow, all that Lady Byron's character presents itself to us [*sic*], as described by Mrs. Stowe and confirmed by other evidence, is, that she entertained wild, fanatical, and fantastical notions about everybody's innate goodness and ultimate salvation. Under the influence of these feelings, which we neither admire nor justify, she is said to have forgiven her husband, forgiven her sister-in-law, forgiven everybody, and to have exhibited towards the sinful and fallen all sorts of, perhaps very angelic, but still very strange, sentiments. Such a woman might do many very strange things under this morbidly virtuous

[1] Robert Wilmot only assumed the additional name of Horton seven years after his unsuccessful mediation between Lord and Lady Byron of March 5th to 11th, 1816.

temperament, and amongst them she might, though probably no other woman in the world could or would, live in affectionate intercourse with one whom she believed to have been guilty, but repentant, of incest, and with her own husband. It is a very strange thing, we admit, and one very difficult to comprehend. . . . Medora Leigh's Autobiography, if it is true, proves that Lady Byron acted towards her incestuous and adulterous niece much as we are told that it is impossible that she could have acted in a previous case of incest. The fact—if it is a fact—of this second instance of the display of Lady Byron's peculiar character, announced by Medora Leigh, raises a presumption that the alleged first instance of its exercise in the husband's case, announced by Mrs. B. Stowe, is after all not so wildly improbable. Medora Leigh's Autobiography, in other words, shows that Lady Byron, strange as was her view of duty, applied it consistently, and we have two entirely independent witnesses to the fact that such was her character and mode of action.

In conclusion, we must observe that, though the controversial value of this book is next to nothing, yet, so far as it goes, it helps rather Lady Byron's advocates than Lord Byron's apologists, inasmuch as in many particulars it confirms Mrs. Stowe's (by which we mean Lady Byron's) statement; inasmuch as it disposes of one of the "Quarterly" Reviewer's chief arguments, that Mrs. Leigh "died unconscious of guilt," and that Lady Byron never openly specified the charge during Mrs. Leigh's lifetime, but "industriously circulated the posthumous calumny before she was well cold in the grave"; whereas Medora Leigh's Autobiography proves that Lady Byron specified the charge in 1840 and even goes so far as to say that Mrs. Leigh was openly taxed with it in 1843; and lastly, inasmuch as it goes some way to show that, however unintelligible, or even, as we think, unjustifiable, Lady Byron's views about the final triumph of good were, she applied those views consistently and on two occasions.

APPENDIX K

CHRONOLOGY OF PERSONS CONNECTED WITH THIS HISTORY.

July 28, 1747. Ralph Milbanke born, afterwards Sir Ralph Milbanke, Bart, M.P., and Lady Byron's father.

November 14, 1751. The Honble. Judith Noel born, afterwards Lady Milbanke, and Lady Byron's mother.

1752. Elizabeth Milbanke born, afterwards Viscountess Melbourne.

November 23, 1759. The Honble. George Villiers born.

April 22, 1766. Germaine Necker born, afterwards Madame de Staël.

July 27, 1766. William Henry Vane, Viscount Barnard, born, afterwards third Earl of Darlington and created Duke of Cleveland.

April 13, 1769. Elizabeth Milbanke married to Sir Peniston Lamb, second baronet, who was born January 29, 1745, was made Viscount Melbourne in 1781, and died July 22, 1828.

June 8, 1770. Sir Peniston Lamb created Lord Melbourne in the peerage of Ireland.

1770. Elizabeth Vassall born, afterwards Lady Holland, when divorced from Sir Godfrey Webster.

November 21, 1773. Hon. Henry Richard Fox born, afterwards third Lord Holland.

July 21, 1775. George William Frederick (sixth Duke of Leeds, and Mrs. Leigh's half-brother) born.[1]

September 22, 1775. Therese Parker born, afterwards the Honble. Mrs. George Villiers. (*See* p. 57.)

September 6, 1776. Lady Mary Henrietta Juliana Osborne born (afterwards Countess of Chichester—Mrs. Leigh's half-sister).

January 9, 1777. Ralph Milbanke married to Judith Noel (Lady Byron's father and mother).

October 18, 1777. Lord Francis Godolphin Osborne born (afterwards, May 14, 1832, Lord Godolphin); Mrs. Leigh's half-brother.

September 19, 1778. Henry Brougham born in Edinburgh.

May, 1779. Lady Conyers divorced from the Marquis of Carmarthen.

1779. Lady Conyers married to the Hon. John Byron.

January 11, 1781. Lord Melbourne created Viscount Melbourne in the peerage of Ireland.

November 2, 1781. Lord Frederick Bentinck born. (*See* p. 60.)

January 14, 1782. Stephen Lushington, D.C.L., M.P., etc., born.

January 3, 1783. Francis Hastings Doyle born.

January 26, 1784. The Hon. Augusta Mary Byron (afterwards Mrs. Leigh) born; daughter of Baroness Conyers and Captain John Byron.

January 26, 1784. Lady Conyers died (in childbirth).

December 21, 1784. Robert John Wilmot born; son of Sir

[1] [His parents were the Marquis of Carmarthen and Amelia, Baroness Conyers in her own right.—Ed.]

Robert Wilmot, Bart., by his marriage (September 23, 1783) with Juliana Elizabeth Byron, second daughter of Admiral the Hon. John Byron, and widow of the Hon. William Byron.

November 13, 1785. Hon. Caroline Ponsonby (afterwards Lady Caroline Lamb) born; daughter of Frederick Viscount Duncannon, by his marriage with Lady Henrietta Spencer.

June 27, 1786. John Cam Hobhouse born.

January 22, 1788. George Gordon Byron, afterwards sixth Lord Byron, born.[1]

February 26, 1788. The Hon. Douglas James William Kinnaird, afterwards a banker, born; son of George, seventh Lord Kinnaird, by his marriage with Elizabeth, daughter of Griffin Ransom, banker.

June 12, 1788. Margaret Mercer Keith Elphinstone, afterwards Comtesse de Flahault, born; daughter of Captain the Hon. George Keith Elphinstone and Jane, daughter and heiress of William Mercer, of Aldie.

March 8, 1789. George Anson Byron, afterwards seventh Lord Byron, born; son of George Anson Byron, by his marriage with Charlotte Henrietta Dallas.

May, 1790. Caroline Rosalie Adelaide St. Jules (the Honble. Mrs. George Lamb) born at Paris; adopted daughter of Lady Elizabeth Foster.

July 8, 1790. Ralph Milbanke, of Seaham, returned member for Durham County.

September 1, 1790. Margaret Power, afterwards Countess of Blessington, born; daughter of Edmund Power, of Curragheen, Waterford.

Thursday, May 17, 1792, Ascension Day. Anne Isabella Milbanke, afterwards Lady Noel Byron, born; daughter of Sir Ralph and the Hon. Lady Milbanke.

September 10, 1792. Viscount Barnard succeeded his father as Earl of Darlington.

March 3, 1794. Jane Elizabeth Scott, daughter of the Rev. James Scott, married to Edward, fifth Earl of Oxford.

April 27, 1796. Maria Susannah Simpson (daughter of John Simpson of Bradley, Durham, by Lady Anne Lyon his wife) married to Sir Thomas Henry Liddell, afterwards Lord Ravensworth. (*See* p. 16.)

July 9, 1797. Henry Richard, third Lord Holland, married Elizabeth, daughter of Richard Vassall. Her marriage with Sir Godfrey Webster, Bart., had been dissolved in June, 1797.

August 17, 1797. George William Frederick, Marquis of

[1] [For his parents, see Explanation, p. xxix.—Ed.]

Carmarthen, Mrs. Leigh's half-brother, married Lady Charlotte Townshend.

January 8, 1798. Sir Ralph Milbanke, grandfather of Anne Isabella, afterwards Lady Byron, died; and Ralph Milbanke, M.P., succeeded to the baronetcy and Halnaby.

April 17, 1798. The Honble. Therese Parker married to the Hon. George Villiers, son of the first Earl of Clarendon. (*See* p. 57.)

January 31, 1799. Mrs. Leigh's half-brother, the Marquis of Carmarthen, succeeded his father as Duke of Leeds.

March 31, 1800. Lord Francis Godolphin Osborne, afterwards Lord Godolphin, married the Hon. Elizabeth Charlotte Eden.

July 16, 1801. Lady Mary Henrietta Julia Osborne, Mrs. Leigh's half-sister, married to Thomas, Lord Pelham, afterwards second Earl of Chichester.

June 2, 1804. Colonel Francis Hastings Doyle married to Diana Elizabeth Milner of Nunappleton, who died January 14, 1828.

February 20, 1805. The Hon. William King born (afterwards Earl of Lovelace).

June 3, 1805. Lady Caroline Ponsonby, daughter of Frederick, third Earl of Bessborough, married to the Hon. William Lamb, M.P., afterwards Viscount Melbourne.

September 1, 1806. Robert John Wilmot married to Anne Horton of Catton.

August 17, 1807. The Hon. Augusta Mary Byron married to her first cousin, George Leigh, Lieutenant-Colonel of 10th Dragoons, and son of General Charles Leigh, by his marriage with Frances Byron, daughter of the Admiral.

May 17, 1809. Caroline Rosalie Adelaide St. Jules married to the Hon. George Lamb (who died January 2, 1834), brother of the above mentioned William Lamb and son of Lady Melbourne, also referred to.

October 19, 1809. Mrs. Lamb's guardian, Lady Elizabeth Foster, was married to William, fifth Duke of Devonshire.

December 24, 1809. Lady Harriet Elizabeth Cavendish, second daughter of William, fifth Duke of Devonshire, was married to Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, afterwards Viscount and Earl Granville.

March 25, 1812. Waltzing party at Melbourne House, given in the morning by Lady Caroline Lamb, at which were present, amongst others, Sidney Smith, Lord Byron, Lady Jersey, Lord and Lady Kinnaird, Miss Mercer Elphinstone, Mrs. Lamb, Lord Palmerston, Miss Milbanke.

September 29, 1812. Parliament was dissolved, and Sir Ralph

Milbanke, Bart., M.P., retired after twenty-two years of silent and neglected whiggery, and the loss of all his property over elections.

July 27, 1813 (his forty-seventh birthday). The Earl of Darlington was married to Elizabeth Russell. (He had been a widower for seven years.)

March 28, 1814. Lord Byron moved to the Albany.

April 15, 1814. Birth of Elizabeth Medora Leigh.

December 24, 1814. Byron and Hobhouse left London. Byron went to Mrs. Leigh at Six Mile Bottom, Hobhouse to Cambridge.

December 30, 1814. Byron and Hobhouse arrived together at Seaham.

December 31, 1814. The settlements were signed.

Monday, January 2, 1815. Lord Byron was married to Anne Isabella Milbanke at 11 o'clock in the drawing-room at Seaham. At 12 they left for Halnaby.

January 21, 1815. Lord and Lady Byron went from Halnaby to Seaham.

February 25, 1815. Colonel Leigh left Six Mile Bottom for his round of visits to Lord Darlington, etc.

March 9, 1815. Lord and Lady Byron left Seaham.

March 12, 1815. Lord and Lady Byron arrived at Six Mile Bottom, Colonel Leigh being absent all that time.

Easter Tuesday, March 28, 1815. Lord and Lady Byron left Six Mile Bottom, and settled at 13, Piccadilly Terrace, in the house belonging to Elizabeth, Duchess of Devonshire.

Early in April, 1815. Mrs. Leigh came to 13, Piccadilly Terrace, on a visit lasting over ten weeks.

April 17, 1815. Lady Byron's uncle, Viscount Wentworth, died in London, and was buried at Kirkby on the 28th.

May 20, 1815. Sir Ralph Milbanke obtained a licence from the Prince Regent to take the name and arms of Noel.

By the end of June, 1815. Mrs. Leigh had left 13, Piccadilly Terrace, and returned to Six Mile Bottom.

July 29, 1815. Lord Byron signed his will in Mrs. Leigh's favour.

August 11, 1815. Viscount Melbourne created Lord Melbourne in the peerage of the United Kingdom.

August 12, 1815. Lord Granville Leveson-Gower created Viscount Granville.

August 30, 1815. Lord Byron went to Six Mile Bottom.

September 4, 1815. Lord Byron returned to 13, Piccadilly Terrace.

November 15, 1815. Mrs. Leigh came to 13, Piccadilly Terrace.

December 10, 1815. Birth of Augusta Ada Byron.

January 15, 1816. Lady Byron and Ada left 13, Piccadilly Terrace.

January 16, 1816. They arrived at Kirkby.

February 2, 1816. Separation formally proposed to Lord Byron.

February 22, 1816. Lady Byron arrived in London and had her first interview with Dr. Lushington at Mivart's Hotel.

March 16, 1816. Mrs. Leigh moved to her rooms in St. James's Palace from 13, Piccadilly Terrace, after a stay of four months.

March 17, 1816. Lord Byron gave his written assent to the principle of a separation by agreement.

March 18, 1816. Captain George Anson Byron (afterwards seventh Lord Byron) married to Elizabeth Mary Pole of Radborne.

April 8, 1816. Countess of Jersey's party. Present Lord Byron, Mrs. Leigh, Hobhouse, Flahault, B. Constant with his wife, Mrs. G. Lamb, Miss Mercer Elphinstone, Brougham, etc.

Easter Sunday, April 14, 1816. Mrs. Leigh went to 13, Piccadilly Terrace, to take leave of Lord Byron before going to Six Mile Bottom.

Sunday, April 21, 1816. Lord Byron signed the deed of separation at 3.30 p.m.—witnesses, John Cam Hobhouse and John Hanson.

April 22, 1816. Lady Byron signed the deed of separation.

April 23, 1816. Lord Byron, Hobhouse and Scrope Davies went to Dover.

April 25, 1816. Lord Byron embarked soon after nine for Ostend.

November 1, 1816. Augusta Ada Byron christened; sponsors, Captain George Byron, the Honble. Lady Noel and Viscountess Tamworth.

Sunday, January 12, 1817. Alba or Clara Allegra Biron born.

June or July, 1817. The Hon. Margaret Mercer Elphinstone married to the Comte de Flahault (p. 50).

July 14, 1817. Death of Madame de Staël.

February 16, 1818. Margaret Power, widow of M. St. Leger Farmer of Poplar Hall, Kildare, married to Charles John Gardiner, Earl of Blessington.

Monday, April 6, 1818. Death of Elizabeth, Viscountess Melbourne, at Melbourne House, Whitehall. The funeral was on the 14th.

April 1, 1819. Henry Brougham was married to Mary Anne Eden, widow of John Spalding.

July 20, 1819. Henry Allen Bathurst born, afterwards registrar of the Admiralty Court and trustee for Lady Byron's private papers.

September 16, 1820. Lord Frederick Bentinck was married to Mary, daughter of William, first Earl of Lonsdale.

July 18, 1821. Sir Thomas Liddell created Lord Ravensworth.

August 8, 1821. Stephen Lushington, D.C.L., married to Sarah Grace Carr, daughter of Thomas William Carr of Frognall, Hampstead, and Esholt Heugh, Northumberland. She died September 20, 1837.

January 28, 1822. The Hon. Lady Noel (formerly Milbanke—born Judith Noel) died at Kirkby; and Lord and Lady Byron assumed the additional name of Noel.

April 19, 1822. Allegra Biron died.

May 8, 1823. Robert John Wilmot assumed by Royal License the additional name of Horton.

Easter Monday, April 19, 1824. Lord Byron died at Missolonghi.

May 14, 1824. News of Lord Byron's death reached London.

May 17, 1824. Lord Byron's memoirs destroyed.

November 20, 1824. Countess of Oxford died.

March 19, 1825. Sir Ralph Noel, Bart. (formerly Milbanke), died at Hampstead, aged 78, and was buried at Kirkby, March 27.

January 25, 1828. Lady Caroline Lamb died six months before her husband, the Hon. William Lamb, became Viscount Melbourne.

February 11, 1828. Major-General Lord Frederick Bentinck, C.B., died.

February 18, 1828. Sir Francis Hastings Doyle created a baronet.

July 28, 1828. John Cam Hobhouse married to Lady Juliana Thomasina Hay.

March 12, 1830. The Hon. Douglas Kinnaird, banker, died.

November 22, 1830. Henry Brougham was made Lord Brougham and Vaux, and Lord Chancellor.

August 15, 1831. Sir Benjamin Hobhouse, Bart., died, and was succeeded by Sir John Cam Hobhouse, Bart.

1832. Robert John Wilmot Horton went as Governor to Ceylon.

January 15, 1833. The Earl of Darlington was created Duke of Cleveland.

1834. Robert John Wilmot Horton succeeded to baronetcy.

July 8, 1835. The Hon. Augusta Ada Byron married to William, eighth Lord King, afterwards Earl of Lovelace.

June 30, 1838. Lord King created Earl of Lovelace.

July 10, 1838. George William Frederick, sixth Duke of Leeds and Mrs. Leigh's half-brother, died.

November 6, 1839. Sir Francis Hastings Doyle, Bart., died.

October 22, 1840. Lord Holland died.

May 31, 1841. The Right Hon. Sir Robert Wilmot Horton, Bart., G.C.B., died.

January 29, 1842. The Duke of Cleveland died.

November 17, 1845. Elizabeth Vassall, Lady Holland, died.

November 22, 1845. Lady Ravensworth died.

June 4, 1849. Margaret, Countess of Blessington, died.

September 3, 1849 (on or about). Elizabeth Medora Leigh died in France (having been married there some three or four years).

February 15, 1850. Mrs. Leigh's half-brother Francis, Lord Godolphin, died.

April, 1850. Mary Anne Clermont died.

May 3, 1850. Colonel George Leigh died.

February 26, 1851. The Right Hon. Sir John Cam Hobhouse created Lord Broughton de Giffard.

July, 1851. Selina Doyle, sister of the first Sir Francis Doyle, died.

Sunday, October 12, 1851. The Hon. Mrs. Leigh (Augusta Mary Byron) died a little after 3 in the morning (p. 32).

November 27, 1852. Augusta Ada, Countess of Lovelace, died.

January 12, 1856. The Hon. Mrs. George Villiers (*née* Therese Parker) died.

May 16, 1860. Anne Isabella, Lady Noel Byron, died.

January 31, 1861. Elizabeth Russell, dowager Duchess of Cleveland, died, aged 84.

August 31, 1862. The Hon. Mrs. George Lamb (Caroline Rosalie Adelaide St. Jules) died.

October 21, 1862. Mrs. Leigh's surviving half-sister, the Dowager Countess of Chichester, died.

November 25, 1862. Harriet, Countess Granville, died.

November 11, 1867. Margaret, Lady Keith and Comtesse de Flahault, died.

March 1, 1868. Admiral Lord Byron died.

May 7, 1868. Lord Brougham died at Cannes.

June 3, 1869. John Cam Hobhouse, Lord Broughton de Giffard, died.

February 4, 1871. Lady Wilmot Horton died.

January 19, 1873. The Right Hon. Stephen Lushington, D.C.L., died at Ockham Park.

December, 1893. William, Earl of Lovelace, died.
Henry Allen Bathurst died.

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